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THE FIRST COMPLETE TRANSLATION
INTO ENGLISH

Honoré de Balzac

IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES

The Chouans
The Country Doctor

WITH A FRONTISPIECE IN PHOTOGRAVURE

VOLUME NINETEEN

P. F. COLLIER & SON
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HONORÉ DE BALZAC

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(LES CHOUANS)

PREFACE

When, many years after its original publication, Balzac reprinted "Les Chouans" as a part of the "Comédie Humaine," he spoke of it in the dedication to his old friend M. Théodore Dablin as "perhaps better than its reputation." He probably referred to the long time which had passed without a fresh demand for it; for, as has been pointed out in the General Introduction to this Series of translations, it first made his fame, and with it he first emerged from the purgatory of anonymous hack-writing. It would therefore have argued a little ingratitude in him had he shown himself dissatisfied with the original reception. The book, however, has, it may be allowed, never ranked among the special favorites of Balzacians; and though it was considerably altered and improved from its first form, it has certain defects which are not likely to escape any reader. In it Balzac was still trying the adventure-novel, the novel of incident; and though he here substitutes a nobler model—Scott, for whom he always had a reverence as intelligent as it was generous—for the Radcliffian or Lewisian ideals of his nonage, he was still not quite at home. Some direct personal knowledge or experience of the matters he wrote about was always more or less necessary to him; and the enthusiasm with which he afterward acknowledged, in a letter to Beyle, the presence of such knowledge in that writer's military passages, confesses his own sense of inferiority.

It is not, however, in the actual fighting scenes, though they are not of the first class, that the drawbacks of "Les Chouans" lie. Though the present version is not my work,

I translated the book some years ago, a process which brings out much more vividly than mere reading the want of art which distinguishes the management of the story. There are in it the materials of a really first-rate romance. The opening skirmish, the hairbreadth escape of Montauran at Alençon, the scenes at the Vivetière, not a few of the incidents of the attack on Fougères, and, above all, the finale, are, or at least might have been made, of the most thrilling interest. Nor are they by any means ill supported by the characters. Hulot is one of the best of Balzac's *grognard* heroes; Montauran may be admitted by the most faithful and jealous devotee of Scott to be a *jeune premier* who unites all the qualifications of his part with a freedom from the flatness which not infrequently characterizes Sir Walter's own good young men, and which drew from Mr. Thackeray the equivocal encomium that he should like to be mother-in-law to several of them. Marche-à-Terre is very nearly a masterpiece; and many of the minor personages are excellent for their work. Only Corentin (who, by the way, appears frequently in other books later) is perhaps below what he ought to be. But the women make up for him. Mademoiselle de Verneuil has admirable piquancy and charm; Madame du Gua is a good bad heroine; and Francine is not a mere soubrette of the machine-made pattern by any means.

How is it, then, that the effect of the book is, as many readers unquestionably feel it to be, "heavy"? The answer is not very difficult; it is simply that Balzac had not yet learned his trade, and that this particular trade was not exactly his. He had a certain precedent in some—not in all, nor in the best—of Scott's books, and in many of his other models, for setting slowly to work; and he abused that precedent here in the most merciless manner. If two-thirds of the first chapter had been cut away, and the early part of the second had been not less courageously thinned, the book would probably have twice the hold that it at present has on the imagination. As it is, I have known some readers (and I have no doubt that they are fairly representative) who

honestly avowed themselves to be "choked off" by the endless vacillations and conversations of Hulot at the "Pilgrim," by the superabundant talk at the inn, and generally by the very fault which, as I have elsewhere noticed, Balzac reprehends in a brother novelist, the fault of giving the reader no definite grasp of story. Balzac could not deny himself the luxury of long conversations; but he never had, and at this time had less than at any other, the art which Dumas possessed in perfection—the art of making the conversation tell the story. Until, therefore, the talk between the two lovers on the way to the Vivetière, the action is so obscure, so broken by description and chat, and so little relieved, except in the actual skirmish and wherever Marche-à-Terre appears, by real *business*, that it cannot but be felt as fatiguing. It can only be promised that if the reader will bear up or skip intelligently till this point he will not be likely to find any fault with the book afterward. The *jour sans lendemain* is admirable almost throughout.

This unfortunate effect is considerably assisted by the working of one of Balzac's numerous and curious crotchets. Those who have only a slight acquaintance with the "Comédie Humaine" must have noticed that chapter-divisions are for the most part wanting in it, or are so few and of such enormous length, that they are rather parts than chapters. It must not, however, be supposed that this was an original peculiarity of the author's, or one founded on any principle. Usually, though not invariably, the original editions of his longer novels, and even of his shorter tales, are divided into chapters, with or without headings, like those of other and ordinary mortals. But when he came to codify and arrange the "Comédie," he, for some reason which I do not remember to have seen explained anywhere in his letters, struck out these divisions, or most of them, and left the books solid, or merely broken up into a few parts. Thus "Le Dernier Chouan" (the original book) had thirty-two chapters, though it had no chapter-headings, while the remodelled work as here given has only three, the first containing nearly a fifth,

the second nearly two-fifths, and the third not much less than a half of the whole work.

Now, everybody who has attended to the matter must see that this absence of chapters is a great addition of heaviness in the case where a book is exposed to the charge of being heavy. The named chapters of Dumas supply something like an argument of the whole book; and even the unnamed ones of Scott lighten, punctuate and relieve the course of the story. It may well be that Balzac's sense that "the story" with him was not the first, or anything like the first consideration, had something to do with his innovation. But I do not think it improved his books at any time, and in the more romantic class of them it is a distinct disadvantage.

"Le Dernier Chouan ou La Bretagne en 1800" first appeared in March, 1829, published in four volumes by Canel, with a preface (afterward suppressed) bearing date the 15th January of the same year. Its subsequent form, with the actual title, threw the composition back to August, 1827, and gave Fougères itself as the place of composition. This revised form, or second edition, appeared in 1834 in two volumes, published by Vimont. When, twelve years later, it took rank in the "Comédie Humaine" as part of the "Scènes de la vie Militaire," a second preface was inserted. which in its turn was cancelled by the author.

THE CHOUANS

OR BRITTANY IN 1799

To M. Théodore Dablin, Merchant,
My first book to my earliest friend
De Balzac

I

THE AMBUSCADE

IN THE EARLY DAYS of the year VIII. at the beginning of Vendémiaire, or toward the end of the month of September, 1799, reckoning by the present calendar, some hundred peasants and a fair number of townspeople who had set out from Fougères in the morning to go to Mayenne, were climbing the mountain of the Pèlerine, which lies about half-way between Fougères and Ernée, a little place where travellers are wont to break their journey. The detachment, divided up into larger and smaller groups, presented as a whole such an outlandish collection of costumes, and brought together individuals belonging to such widely different neighborhoods and callings, that it may be worth while to describe their various characteristics, and in this way impart to the narrative the lifelike coloring that is so highly valued in our day, although, according to certain critics, this is a hindrance to the portrayal of sentiments.

Some of the peasants—most of them in fact—went barefoot. Their whole clothing consisted in a large goat-skin, which covered them from shoulder to knee, and breeches of very coarse white cloth, woven of uneven threads, that bore witness to the neglected state of local industries. Their long matted locks mingled so habitually with the hairs of their goat-skin cloaks, and so completely hid the faces that they

bent upon the earth, that the goat's skin might have been readily taken for a natural growth, and at first sight the miserable wearers could hardly be distinguished from the animals whose hide now served them for a garment. But very shortly a pair of bright eyes peering through the hair, like drops of dew shining in thick grass, spoke of a human intelligence within, though the expression of the eyes certainly inspired more fear than pleasure. Their heads were covered with dirty red woollen bonnets, very like the Phrygian caps that the Republic in those days had adopted as a symbol of liberty. Each carried a long wallet made of sacking over his shoulder at the end of a thick knotty oak cudgel. There was not much in the wallets.

Others wore above their caps a great broad-brimmed felt hat, with a band of woollen chenille of various colors about the crown, and these were clad altogether in the same coarse linen cloth that furnished the wallets and breeches of the first group; there was scarcely a trace of the new civilization in their dress. Their long hair straggled over the collar of a round jacket which reached barely to the hips, a garment peculiar to the Western peasantry, with little square side pockets in it. Beneath this open-fronted jacket was a waistcoat, fastened with big buttons and made of the same cloth. Some wore sabots on the march, others thriftily carried them in their hands. Soiled with long wear, blackened with dust and sweat, this costume had one distinct merit of its own; for if it was less original than the one first described, it represented a period of historical transition that ended in the almost magnificent apparel of a few men who shone out like flowers in the midst of the company.

Their red or yellow waistcoats, decorated with two parallel rows of copper buttons, like a sort of oblong cuirass, and their blue linen breeches, stood out in vivid contrast to the white clothing and skin cloaks of their comrades; they looked like poppies and cornflowers in a field of wheat. Some few of them were shod with the wooden sabots that the Breton peasants make for themselves, but most of them

wore great iron-bound shoes and coats of very coarse material, shaped after the old French fashion, to which our peasants still cling religiously. Their shirt collars were fastened by silver studs with designs of an anchor or a heart upon them; and, finally, their wallets seemed better stocked than those of their comrades. Some of them even included a flask, filled with brandy no doubt, in their traveller's outfit, hanging it round their necks by a string.

A few townspeople among these semi-barbarous folk looked as if they marked the extreme limits of civilization in those regions. Like the peasants, they exhibited conspicuous differences of costume, some wearing round bonnets, and some flat or peaked caps; some had high boots with the tops turned down, some wore shoes surmounted by gaiters. Ten or so of them had put themselves into the jacket known to the Republicans as a *carmagnole;* others again, well-to-do artisans doubtless, were dressed from head to foot in materials of uniform color; and the most elegantly arrayed of them all wore swallow-tailed coats or riding-coats of blue or green cloth in more or less threadbare condition. These last, moreover, wore boots of various patterns, as became people of consequence, and flourished large canes, like fellows who face their luck with a stout heart. A head carefully powdered here and there, or decently plaited queues, showed the desire to make the most of ourselves which is inspired in us by a new turn taken in our fortunes or our education.

Any one seeing these men brought together as if by chance, and astonished at finding themselves assembled, might have thought that a conflagration had driven the population of a little town from their homes. But the times and the place made this body of men interesting for very different reasons. A spectator initiated into the secrets of the civil discords which then were rending France would have readily picked out the small number of citizens in that company upon whose loyalty the Republic could depend, for almost every one who composed it had taken part against the

Government in the war of four years ago. One last distinguishing characteristic left no doubt whatever as to the divided opinions of the body of men. The Republicans alone were in spirits as they marched. As for the rest of the individuals that made up the band, obviously as they might differ in their dress, one uniform expression was visible on all faces and in the attitude of each—the expression which misfortune gives.

The faces of both townspeople and peasants bore the stamp of deep dejection; there was something sullen about the silence they kept. All of them were bowed apparently beneath the yoke of the same thought—a terrible thought, no doubt, but carefully hidden away. Every face was inscrutable; the unwonted lagging of their steps alone could betray a secret understanding. A few of them were marked out by a rosary that hung round about their necks, although they ran some risks by keeping about them this sign of a faith that had been suppressed rather than uprooted: and one of these from time to time would shake back his hair and defiantly raise his head. Then they would furtively scan the woods, the footpaths, and the crags that shut in the road on either side, much as a dog sniffs the wind as he tries to scent the game; but as they only heard the monotonous sound of the steps of their mute comrades, they hung their heads again with the forlorn faces of convicts on their way to the galleys, where they are now to live and die.

The advance of this column upon Mayenne, composed as it was of such heterogeneous elements, and representing such widely different opinions, was explained very readily by the presence of another body of troops which headed the detachment. About a hundred and fifty soldiers were marching at the head of the column under the command of the *chief of a demi-brigade.* It may not be unprofitable to explain, for those who have not witnessed the drama of the Revolution, that this appellation was substituted for the title of colonel, then rejected by patriots as too aristocratic. The soldiers belonged to a demi-brigade of infantry stationed in

the depôt at Mayenne. In those disturbed times the soldiers of the Republic were all dubbed Blues by the population of the West. The blue and red uniforms of the early days of the Republic, which are too well remembered even yet to require description, had given rise to this nickname. So the detachment of Blues was serving as an escort to this assemblage, consisting of men who were nearly all ill satisfied at being thus directed upon Mayenne, there to be submitted to a military discipline which must shortly clothe them all alike, and drill a uniformity into their march and ways of thinking which was at present entirely lacking among them.

This column was the contingent of Fougères, obtained thence with great difficulty; and representing its share of the levy which the Directory of the French Republic had required by a law passed on the tenth day of the previous Messidor. The Government had asked for a subsidy of a hundred millions, and for a hundred thousand men, so as to send reinforcements at once to their armies, then defeated by the Austrians in Italy and by the Prussians in Germany; while Suwarroff, who had aroused Russia's hopes of making a conquest of France, menaced them from Switzerland. Then it was that the departments of the West known as la Vendée, Brittany, and part of Lower Normandy, which had been pacified three years ago by the efforts of General Hoche after four years of hard fighting, appeared to think that the moment had come to renew the struggle.

Attacked thus in so many directions, the Republic seemed to be visited with a return of her early vigor. At first the defence of the departments thus threatened had been intrusted to the patriotic residents by one of the provisions of that same law of Messidor. The Government, as a matter of fact, had neither troops nor money available for the prosecution of civil warfare, so the difficulty was evaded by a bit of bombast on the part of the Legislature. They could do nothing for the revolted districts, so they reposed complete confidence in them. Perhaps also they expected that this measure, by setting the citizens at odds among themselves, would extin-

guish the rebellion at its source. "*Free companies will be organized in the departments of the West*"—so ran the proviso which brought about such dreadful retaliation.

This impolitic ordinance drove the West into so hostile an attitude that the Directory had no hope left of subduing it all at once. In a few days, therefore, the Assemblies were asked for particular enactments with regard to the slight reinforcements due by virtue of the proviso that had authorized the formation of the free companies. So a new law had been proclaimed a few days before this story begins, and came into effect on the third complementary day of the calendar in the year VII., ordaining that these scanty levies of men should be organized into regiments. The regiments were to bear the names of the departments of the Sarthe, Ourthe, Mayenne, Ille-et-Vilaine, Morbihan, Loire-Inférieure, and Maine-et-Loire. *These regiments*—so the law provided—*are specially enrolled to oppose the Chouans, and can never be drafted over the frontiers on any pretext whatsoever.* These tedious but little known particulars explain at once the march of the body of men under escort by the Blues, and the weakness of the position in which the Directory found themselves. So, perhaps, it is not irrelevant to add that these beautiful and patriotic intentions of theirs came no further on the road to being carried out than their insertion in the "Bulletin des Lois." The decrees of the Republic had no longer the forces of great moral ideas, of patriotism, or of terror behind them. These had been the causes of their former practical efficiency; so now they created men and millions on paper which never found their way into the army or the treasury. The machinery of the Revolutionary government was directed by incapable hands, and circumstances made impression on the administration of the law instead of being controlled by it.

The departments of Mayenne and Ille-et-Vilaine were then in command of an experienced officer, who, being on the spot, determined that now was the opportune moment for arranging to draw his contingents out of Brittany, and

more particularly from Fougères, which was one of the most formidable centres of Chouan operations, hoping in this way to diminish the strength of these districts from which danger threatened. This devoted veteran availed himself of the delusive provisions of the law to proclaim that he would at once arm and equip the requisitionaries, and that he held in hand for their benefit a month's pay, which the Government had promised to these irregular forces. Although Brittany declined every kind of military service at that time, this plan of operations succeeded at the first start on the faith of the promises made, and so readily that the officer began to grow uneasy.

But he was an old watch-dog, and not easily put off his guard, so that, as soon as he saw a portion of his contingent hurrying to the bureau of the district, he suspected that there was some hidden motive for this rapid influx of men; and, perhaps, he had guessed rightly when he believed that their object was to procure arms for themselves. Upon this he took measures to secure his retreat upon Alençon, without waiting for the later arrivals. He wished to be within call of the better affected districts, though even there the continual spread of the insurrection made the success of his plans extremely problematical. In obedience to his instructions, he had kept the news of the disasters that had befallen our armies abroad a profound secret, as well as the disquieting tidings that came from la Vendée; and on the morning when this story begins he had made an effort to reach Mayenne by a forced march. Once there, he thought to carry out the law at his leisure, and to fill up the gaps in his demi-brigade with Breton conscripts. That word *conscript*, which became so well known later on, had replaced for the first time, in the wording of the law, the term Requisitionary, by which the Republican recruits had at first been described.

Before leaving Fougères, the commandant had made his own troops surreptitiously take charge of all the cartridge boxes and rations of bread belonging to the entire body of men, so that the attention of the conscripts should not be

called to the length of the journey. He had made up his mind to call no halt on the way to Ernée; the Chouans doubtless were abroad in the district, and the men of his new contingent, once recovered from their surprise, might enter into concerted action with them. A sullen silence prevailed among the band of requisitionaries, who had been taken aback by the old republican's tactics; and this, taken with their lagging gait as they climbed the mountain side, increased to the highest pitch the anxiety of the commandant of the demi-brigade, Hulot by name. He was keenly interested in noting those marked characteristics which have been previously described, and was walking in silence among five subaltern officers who all respected their chief's preoccupied mood.

As Hulot reached the summit of the Pèlerine, however, he instinctively turned his head to examine the restless faces of the requisitionaries, and forthwith broke the silence. As a matter of fact, the Bretons had been moving more and more slowly, and already they had put an interval of some two hundred paces between them and their escort. Hulot made a sort of grimace peculiar to him at this.

"What the devil is the matter with the ragamuffins?" he cried in the deep tones of his voice. "Instead of stepping out, these conscripts of ours have their legs glued together, I think."

At these words the officers who were with him turned to look behind them, acting on an impulse like that which makes us wake with a start at some sudden noise. The sergeants and corporals followed their example, and the whole company came to a standstill, without waiting for the wished-for word of command to "Halt!" If, in the first place, the officers gave a glance over the detachment that was slowly crawling up the Pèlerine like an elongated tortoise, they were sufficiently struck with the view that spread itself out before their eyes to leave Hulot's remark unanswered, its importance not being at all appreciated by them. They were young men who, like many others, had been torn away from

learned studies to defend their country, and the art of war had not yet extinguished the love of other arts in them.

Although they were coming from Fougères, whence the same picture that now lay before their eyes could be seen equally well, they could not help admiring it again for the last time, with all the differences that the change in the point of view had made in it. They were not unlike those dilettanti who take more pleasure in a piece of music for a closer knowledge of its details.

From the heights of the Pèlerine the wide valley of the Couësnon extends before the traveller's eyes. The town of Fougères occupies one of the highest points on the horizon. From the high rock on which it is built the castle commands three or four important ways of communication, a position which formerly made it one of the keys of Brittany. From their point of view the officers saw the whole length and breadth of this basin, which is as remarkable for its marvellously fertile soil as for the varied scenery it presents. The mountains of schist rise above it on all sides, as in an amphitheatre, the warm coloring of their sides is disguised by the oak forests upon them, and little cool valleys lie concealed in their slopes.

The crags describe a wall about an apparently circular inclosure, and in the depths below them lies a vast stretch of delicate meadow-land laid out like an English garden. A multitude of irregularly-shaped quick-set hedges surrounds the numberless domains, and trees are planted everywhere, so that this green carpet presents an appearance not often seen in French landscapes. Unsuspected beauty lies hidden in abundance among its manifold shadows and lights, and effects strong and broad enough to strike the most indifferent nature.

At this particular moment the stretch of country was brightened by a fleeting glory such as Nature loves at times to use to heighten the grandeur of her imperishable creations. All the while that the detachment was crossing the

valley, the rising sun had slowly scattered the thin white mists that hover above the fields in September mornings; and now, when the soldiers looked back, an invisible hand seemed to raise the last of the veils that had covered the landscape. The fine delicate clouds were like a transparent gauze enshrouding precious jewels that lie, exciting our curiosity, behind it. All along the wide stretch of horizon that the officers could see, there was not the lightest cloud in heaven to persuade them by its silver brightness that that great blue vault above them was really the sky. It was more like a silken canopy held up by the uneven mountain peaks, and borne aloft to protect this wonderful combination of field and plain and wood and river.

The officers did not weary of scanning that extent of plain, which gave rise to so much beauty of field and wood. Some of them looked hither and thither for long before their gaze was fixed at last on the wonderful diversity of color in the woods, where the sober hues of groups of trees that were turning sear brought out more fully the richer hues of the bronze foliage, a contrast heightened still further by irregular indentations of emerald green meadow. Others dwelt on the warm coloring of the fields, with their cone-shaped stooks of buckwheat piled up like the sheaves of arms that soldiers make in a bivouac, and the opposing hues of the fields of rye that were interspersed among them, all golden with stubble after the harvest. There was a dark-colored slate roof here and there, with a white smoke ascending from it; and here again a bright silvery streak of some winding bit of the Couësnon would attract the gaze—a snare for the eyes which follow it, and so lead the soul all unconsciously into vague musings. The fresh fragrance of the light autumn wind and the strong forest scents came up like an intoxicating incense for those who stood admiring this beautiful country, and saw with delight its strange wild-flowers and the vigorous green growth that makes it a rival of the neighboring land of Britain, the country which bears the same name in common with it. A few cattle gave life to the scene, that was already full of

dramatic interest. The birds were singing, giving to the breezes in the valley a soft low vibration of music.

If the attentive imagination will discern to the utmost the splendid effects of the lights and shadows, the misty outlines of the hills, the unexpected distant views afforded in places where there was a gap among the trees, a broad stretch of water, or the coy, swiftly-winding courses of streams; if memory fills in, so to speak, these outlines, brief as the moment that they represent; then those for whom these pictures possess a certain worth will form a dim idea of the enchanting scene that came as a surprise to the yet impressionable minds of the young officers.

They thought that these poor creatures were leaving their own country and their beloved customs in sadness, in order to die, perhaps, on foreign soil, and instinctively forgave them for a reluctance which they well understood. Then with a kindness of heart natural to soldiers, they disguised their complaisance under the appearance of a wish to study the lovely landscape from a military point of view. But Hulot, for the commandant must be called by his name, to avoid his scarcely euphonious title of chief of demi-brigade, was not the kind of soldier who is smitten with the charms of scenery at a time when danger is at hand, even if the Garden of Eden were to lie before him. He shook his head disapprovingly, and his thick black eyebrows were contracted, giving a very stern expression to his face.

"Why the devil don't they come along?" he asked for the second time, in a voice that had grown hoarse with many a hard campaign. "Is there some Holy Virgin or other in the village whose hand they want to squeeze?"

"You want to know why?" a voice replied.

The sounds seemed to come from one of the horns with which herdsmen in these dales call their cattle together. The commandant wheeled round at the words, as sharply as if he had felt a prick from a sword point, and saw, two paces from him, a queerer looking being than any of those now on the way to Mayenne to serve the Republic.

The stranger was a broad-shouldered, thick-set man; his head looked almost as large as that of a bull, and was not unlike it in other respects; his wide, thick nostrils made his nose seem shorter than it really was; his thick lips turned up to display a snowy set of teeth, long lashes bristled round the large black eyes, and he had a pair of drooping ears, and red hair that seemed to belong rather to some root-eating race than to the noble Caucasian stock. There was an entire absence of any other characteristics of civilized man about the bare head, which made it more remarkable still. His face might have been turned to bronze by the sun; its angular outlines suggested a remote resemblance to the granite rocks that formed the underlying soil of the district, and his face was the only discernible portion of the body of this strange being. From his neck downward he was enveloped in a kind of smock-frock, or blouse of a coarse kind of material, much rougher than that of which the poorest conscript's breeches were made. This smock-frock or *sarrau*, in which an antiquary would have recognized the *saye* (*saga*) or *sayon* of the Gauls, reached only half-way down his person, where his nether integuments of goat's skin were fastened to it by wooden skewers, so roughly cut that the bark was not removed from all of them. It was scarcely possible to distinguish a human form in the "goat-skins" (so they call them in the district), which completely covered his legs and thighs. His feet were hidden by huge sabots. His long, sleek hair, very near the color of the skins he wore, was parted in the middle and fell on either side of his face, much as you see it arranged in some medieval statues still existing in cathedrals. Instead of the knotty cudgel with which the conscripts slung their wallets from their shoulders, he was hugging a large whip to his breast, like a gun, a whip with a cleverly plaited thong that seemed quite twice the usual length.

The sudden appearance of this quaint being seemed readily explicable. At the first sight of him several officers took him for a conscript or requisitionary (both of these

terms were still in use) who had seen the halt made by the column and had fallen in with it. Nevertheless the man's arrival amazed the commandant strangely; for though there was not the slightest trace of alarm about him, he grew thoughtful. After a survey of the new-comer, he repeated his question mechanically, as if he were preoccupied with sinister thoughts.

"Yes, why don't they come up? Do you happen to know?"

His surly interlocutor answered with an accent which showed that he found it sufficiently difficult to express himself in French. "Because," he said, stretching out his big, rough hand toward Ernée, "there lies Maine, and here Brittany ends," and he struck the ground heavily as he threw down the handle of his whip at the commandant's feet.

If a barbarous tomtom were suddenly struck in the middle of a piece of music, the impression produced would be very like the effect made upon the spectators of this scene by the stranger's concise speech. That word "speech" will scarcely give an idea of the hatred, the thirst for vengeance expressed in the scornful gesture and the brief word or two, or of the fierce and stern energy in the speaker's face. The extreme roughness of the man, who looked as though he had been hewn into shape by an axe, his gnarled skin, the lines of ignorant stupidity graven in every feature, gave him the look of a savage divinity. As he stood there in his prophetic attitude he looked like an embodied spirit of that Brittany which had just awakened from a three years' sleep, to begin a struggle once more in which victory could never show her face save through a double veil of crape.

"There's a pretty image," said Hulot to himself. "To my mind, he looks like an envoy from folk who are about to open negotiations with powder and ball!"

When he had muttered these words between his teeth, the commandant's eyes travelled from the man before him over the landscape, from the landscape to the detachment, from the detachment over the steep slopes on either side of the

way with the tall gorse-bushes of Brittany shading their summits, and thence he suddenly turned upon the stranger, whom he submitted to a mute examination, ending it at last by asking him sharply: "Where do you come from?"

His keen, piercing eyes were trying to read the secret thoughts beneath the inscrutable face before him, a face which had meantime resumed the usual expression of vacuous stolidity that envelops a peasant's face in repose.

"From the country of the *gars*," the man answered, without a trace of apprehension.

"Your name?"

"Marche-à-Terre."

"What makes you call yourself by your Chouan nickname? It is against the law."

Marche-à-Terre, as he called himself, gaped at the commandant with such a thoroughly genuine appearance of imbecility that the soldier thought his remark was not understood.

"Are you part of the Fougères requisition?"

To this question Marche-à-Terre replied with an "I don't know," in that peculiarly hopeless fashion which puts a stop to all conversation. He sat himself down quietly at the roadside, drew from his blouse some slices of a thin dark bannock made of buckwheat meal, the staple food of Brittany, a melancholy diet in which only a Breton can take delight, and began to eat with wooden imperturbability.

He looked so absolutely devoid of every kind of intelligence that the officers compared him as he sat first to one of the cattle browsing in the pasture land below, next to an American Indian, and lastly to some aboriginal savage at the Cape of Good Hope. Even the commandant himself was deceived by his attitude, and heeded his fears no longer, till by way of making assurance surer still he gave a last glance at the suspected herald of an approaching massacre, and noticed that his hair, his blouse, and his goat-skin breeches were covered with thorns, bits of wood, scraps of bramble and leaves, as if the Chouan had come through the thickets

for a long distance. He looked significantly at his adjutant Gérard, who was standing beside him, gripped his hand, and said in a low voice: "We went out to look for wool, and we shall go back again shorn."

The astonished officers eyed one another in silence.

Here we must digress a little, so that those stay-at-home people who are accustomed to believe nothing because they never see anything for themselves, may be induced to sympathize with the fears of the commandant Hulot, for these people would be capable of denying the existence of a Marche-à-Terre and of the Western peasants who behaved with such heroism in those times.

The word *gars*, pronounced *gâ*, is a relic of the Celtic tongue. It passed into French from the Bas-Breton, and of all words in the language that we speak to-day in France, this one preserves the oldest traditions. The *gais* was the principal weapon of the Gaëls or Gauls; *gaisdé* meant armed, *gais* meant valor, and *gas* force. The close similarity proves that the word *gars* is connected with these expressions in the language of our ancestors. The word corresponds to the Latin word *vir*, a man; the significance at the root of *virtus*, strength or courage. The apology for this dissertation lies in the fact that the word is a part of our national history, and this possibly may reinstate such words as *gars*, *garçon*, *garçonette*, *garce*, *garcette*, in the good graces of some persons who banish them all from conversation as uncouth expressions; they come of a warlike origin for all that, and will turn up now and again in the course of this narrative. "*C'est une fameuse garce!*" was the little appreciated eulogium which Mme. de Staël received in a little canton of the Vendomois, where she spent some of her days in exile.

The Gaul has left deeper traces of his character in Brittany than in all the rest of France. Those parts of the province where the wild life and superstitious spirit of our rough ancestors are glaringly evident, so to speak, even in our day, were called the *Pays des Gars*. When the population of a district consists of a number of uncivilized people

like those who have just been collected together in the opening scene, the folk round about in the country side call them "The Gars of such and such a parish," which classical epithet is a sort of reward for the loyalty of their efforts to preserve the traditions of their Celtic language and customs. In their daily lives, moreover, there are deep traces of the superstitious beliefs and practices of ancient times. Feudal customs are even yet respected, antiquaries find Druidical monuments there, and the spirit of modern civilization hesitates to traverse those vast tracts of primeval forest. There is an incredible ferocity and a dogged obstinacy about the national character, but an oath is religiously kept. Our laws, customs, and dress, our modern coinage and our language, are utterly unknown among them; and if, on the one hand, their combination of patriarchal simplicity and heroic virtues makes them less apt at projecting complicated schemes than Mohicans or North American redskins, on the other hand they are as magnanimous, as hardy, and as shrewd.

The fact that Brittany is situated in Europe makes it very much more interesting than Canada. It is surrounded by enlightenment, but the beneficent warmth never penetrates it; the country is like some frozen piece of coal that lies, a dim black mass, in the heart of a blazing fire. The attempts made by some shrewd heads to make this large portion of France, with its undeveloped resources, amenable, to give it social life and prosperity, had failed; even the efforts of the Government had come to nothing among a stationary people, wedded to the usages prescribed by immemorial tradition. The natural features of the country offer a sufficient explanation of this misfortune; the land is furrowed with ravines and torrents, with lakes and marshes, it bristles with hedges, as they call a sort of earthwork or fortification that makes a citadel of every field. There are neither roads nor canals, and the temper of an ignorant population must be taken into account, a population given over to prejudices that cause dangers to which this story will bear witness, a

population that will none of our modern methods of agriculture.

The picturesque nature of the country and the superstitions of its inhabitants both preclude the aggregation of individuals and the consequent benefits that might be gained from a comparison and exchange of ideas. There are no villages. Frail structures, cabins, as they call them, are scattered abroad over the country side, and every family there lives as if in a desert. At the only times when the people are brought together, the meeting is a brief one, and takes place on Sundays, or on one of the religious festivals observed by the parish. These unsociable gatherings only last for a few hours, and are always presided over by the *recteur*, the only master that their dull minds recognize. The peasant hears the awe-inspiring voice of the priest, and returns to his unwholesome dwelling for the week; he goes out to work and goes home again to sleep. If any one goes near him, it is that same rector, who is the soul of the country side. It was at the bidding of the priest, too, that so many thousands of men flung themselves upon the Republic, when these very Breton districts furnished large bodies of men for the first Chouan organization, five years before this story begins.

In those days several brothers, daring smugglers, named Cottereau, who gave their name to the war, had plied their dangerous trade between Laval and Fougères. But there was nothing noble about these rural outbreaks; for if La Vendée had elevated brigandage into warfare, Brittany had degraded war into brigandage. The proscription of the princes and the overthrow of religion were, to the Chouans, simply pretexts for plundering excursions, and all the events of that internecine warfare were colored by something of the savage ferocity peculiar to the disposition of the race. When the real supporters of the Monarchy came in search of recruits among this ignorant and combative population, they tried, and tried in vain, when they ranged the Chouans under the white flag, to infuse some larger ideas

into the enterprises which had made Chouannerie detested. The Chouans remained a memorable instance of the dangers incurred by stirring up the masses of a half-civilized country.

The scene that the first Breton valley offers to the traveller's eyes, the picture that has been given of the men who composed the detachment of requisitionaries, the description of the gars who appeared on the summit of the Pèlerine, would give altogether an accurate idea of the province and of those who dwelt in it. From those details an expert imagination could construct the theatre and the machinery of war; therein lay all the elements.

Concealed enemies were lurking behind those hedges, with the autumn flowers in them, in every lovely valley. Every field was a fortress, every tree was a snare in disguise, not an old hollow willow trunk but concealed a stratagem. The field of battle lay in all directions. At every corner of the road muskets were lying in wait for the Blues; young girls, smiling as they went, would think it no treachery to lure them under the fire of cannon, and go afterward with their fathers and brothers on pilgrimage to ask for absolution, and to pray to be inspired with fresh deceits, at the shrine of some carved and gilded Virgin. The religion, or rather the fetichism, of these ignorant folk had deprived murder of all sense of remorse.

So it befell that when the struggle had once begun there was danger everywhere throughout the length and breadth of the country; in sound as in silence, in pardon or in terror, and by the fireside just as much as on the highroad. They were conscientiously treacherous, these savages who were serving God and the King by making war like Mohicans. Yet if the historian is to give a true and faithful picture of the struggle, in every particular, he ought to add that as soon as Hoche's treaty was signed the whole country became blithe and friendly at once. Families who had been ready to fly at each other's throats the day before supped without danger under the same roof.

The moment that Hulot became aware of the treacherous secrets revealed by Marche-à-Terre's goat-skin apparel, his conviction was confirmed; the auspicious peace inaugurated through Hoche's ability was now at an end; its longer duration indeed seemed to him impossible. It was in this manner that war broke out again, after three years of inaction, and in a more formidable guise than hitherto. Perhaps the temper of the Revolution, which had grown milder since the Ninth of Thermidor, was about to revert to the ferocity which had made it hateful to every rightly constituted mind. English gold, as usual, contributed to bring about discord in France. If the Republic were abandoned by the young Bonaparte, who seemed to be its tutelary genius, it seemed as if it would be utterly unable to make a stand against so many foes, and the last to appear were the bitterest among them. Civil war, heralded by numberless risings of little importance, assumed a gravity before unknown, from the moment that Chouans conceived the idea of attacking so strong an escort. This, in a concise form, was the substance of Hulot's reflections, when he believed that in Marche-à-Terre's sudden appearance he saw the signs of a skilfully prepared trap. And he alone, for no one else was in the secret of the danger.

The pause which ensued after the commandant's prophetic remark to Gérard, and which put an end to the previous scene, sufficed for Hulot to regain his composure. The veteran's brain had almost reeled; he could not shake off the gloom which covered his brow as he thought that he was even then surrounded by the horrors of a warfare marked by atrocities from which, perhaps, even cannibals would shrink. His captain, Merle, and the adjutant Gérard, both of them friends of his, tried to understand the terror, quite new in their experience, of which their leader's face gave evidence; then they looked at Marche-à-Terre, who was eating his bannock, and could not discern the remotest connection between the brave commandant's uneasiness and this sort of animal at the roadside.

Hulot's face soon cleared, however.

While he deplored the calamities that had befallen the Republic, he was glad at heart that he was to fight for her; he vowed gayly to himself that he would not be gulled by the Chouans, and that he would read this dark intriguing nature that they had done him the honor to send against him. Before making any decision he began to study the place in which his enemies wished to take him at a disadvantage. His thick black eyebrows contracted in a heavy frown as he saw from the middle of the road where he stood that their way lay through a sort of ravine, of no great depth it is true, but with woods on either side, and many footpaths through them. He spoke to his two comrades in a low and very uncertain voice—

"We are in a nice hornet's nest!"

"What is it that you are afraid of?"

"Afraid?" answered the commandant. "Yes, afraid. I have always been afraid of being shot like a dog at some bend in a wood, without so much as a 'Who goes there?'"

"Bah," chuckled Merle, "even a 'Who goes there?' is also a deception."

"We really are in danger then?" asked Gérard, as much amazed now at Hulot's coolness as he had been before at his brief spasm of fear.

"Hush!" said the commandant; "we are in the wolf's den; it is as dark as in an oven in there, and we must strike a light. It is lucky," he went on, "that we occupy the highest ground on this side." He added a vigorous epithet by way of ornament, and went on, "Perhaps I shall end by understanding it clearly enough down there."

The commandant beckoned the two officers, and they made a ring round Marche-à-Terre; the gars pretended to think that he was in the way, and got up promptly.

"Stop where you are, vagabond!" cried Hulot, giving him a push so that he went down again on to the slope where he had been sitting. From that moment the chief of demi-brigade never took his eyes off the impassive Breton.

"It is time to let you know, my friends," said Hulot, addressing the two officers in low tones, "that they have shut up shop down there. A mighty rummaging has been set up in the Assemblies, and the Directory in consequence has sent a few strokes of the broom our way. Those Pentarchs of Directors—call them Pantaloons, it is better French—have just lost a good sword; Bernadotte has had enough of it."

"Who succeeds him?" asked Gérard eagerly.

"Milet-Mureau, an old pedant. They have pitched on an awkward time for setting numskulls to pilot us. There are English rockets going up on the coasts: these cockchafers of Vendeans and Chouans about: and the fellows at the back of those marionettes yonder have cleverly selected the moment when we are about to succumb."

"What?" asked Merle.

"Our armies are beaten back at every point," said Hulot, lowering his voice more and more. "The Chouans have intercepted our couriers twice already; my own despatches and the last decrees issued only reached me by a special express that Bernadotte sent just as he resigned his place in the ministry. Personal friends, fortunately, have written to me about this crisis. Fouché has found out that traitors in Paris have advised the tyrant Louis XVIII. to send a leader to his dupes in the interior. Some think that Barras is a traitor to the Republic. In short, Pitt and the princes have sent a *ci-devant* over here; a strong man and a capable leader, he intends, by combining the efforts of Vendeans and Chouans, to teach the Republic to respect them. The fellow has landed in Morbihan; I knew it before any one else, and I advised those rascals in Paris of his arrival. *The Gars* he has chosen to call himself. All those animals," and he pointed to Marche-à-Terre, "fit themselves up with names that would give any honest patriot the colic if you called him by them. But our man is here in this country, and the appearance of that Chouan yonder," again he pointed to Marche-à-Terre, "tells me that he is close upon us. But

there is no need to teach grimaces to an old monkey, and you will help me now to cage my linnets, and in less than no time. A pretty idiot I should be to let myself be snared like a bird, and that by a *ci-devant* from London, come over here pretending that he wants to dust our jackets."

Thus informed in confidence of the critical state of affairs, the two officers, who knew that their commandant never alarmed himself without good reason, assumed that gravity of expression common to soldiers in pressing danger, who have been thoroughly tempered and have some insight into the ways of mankind. Gérard, whose rank, since suppressed, brought him into close contact with his commandant, made up his mind to reply, and to ask for the rest of the political news which had evidently been passed over; but a sign from Hulot kept him silent, and all three of them fell to scrutinizing Marche-à-Terre.

The Chouan showed not the least sign of agitation at finding himself watched in this way by men as formidable intellectually as they were physically. This sort of warfare was a novelty to the two officers; their curiosity was keenly excited by the opening event, and the whole matter seemed to be invested with an almost romantic interest. They were inclined to joke about it; but at the first word which they let fall, Hulot looked at them sternly and said—

"*Tonnerre de Dieu*, citizens! don't smoke your pipes over a barrel of powder. You might as well amuse yourselves with carrying water in a basket, as by showing courage where it isn't wanted. Gérard," he continued, leaning over and whispering in the adjutant's ear, "get nearer to the brigand bit by bit, and if he makes the least suspicious movement, run him through the body at once. And I myself will take measures for keeping up the conversation if our unknown friends really have a mind to begin it."

Gérard bent his head slightly in obedience. Then he began to look round at different points in the landscape of the valley, with which the reader has had an opportunity of making himself familiar. He appeared to wish to study

them more closely, stepping back upon himself, so to speak, quite naturally; but the landscape, it will well be believed, was the last thing he had in view. Marche-à-Terre, on the other hand, took no heed whatever of the officer's manœuvres. One might have supposed that he was fishing in the ditch with a rod and line, from the way he played with his whip handle.

While Gérard was trying in this way to take up his position by the Chouan, the commandant spoke in a low voice to Merle.

"Take ten picked men and a sergeant, and post them yourself up above us, just on that part of the summit on this side, where the road widens and makes a kind of plateau; you could see a good long stretch of the road to Ernée from the place. Pick out a spot where there are no woods on either side of the road, so that the sergeant can keep a look-out over the country round. Take Clef-des-Cœurs; he has his wits about him. This is no laughing matter at all; I would not give a penny for our skins if we don't take every advantage we can get."

Captain Merle understood the importance of prompt action, and the manœuvre was executed at once. Then the commandant waved his right hand, demanding absolute silence from his men, who stood round about amusing themselves with chat. He signed to them afresh to shoulder arms, and as soon as everything was quiet again, his eyes travelled from one side of the road to the other; he seemed in hope to detect muffled sounds of weapons or of footsteps, preliminaries of the looked-for struggle, and to be listening anxiously for them. His keen black eyes appeared to penetrate the very depths of the woods in a marvellous way. No sign was forthcoming. He consulted the sand on the road, as savages do, trying every means by which he could discover the invisible foes, whose audacity was known to him.

In despair at finding nothing which justified his fears, he went toward the side of the road, climbed with some difficulty up the bank, and went deliberately along the top of it.

Suddenly he felt how largely his own experience conduced to the safety of his detachment, and he came down again. His face grew darker, for leaders in those days were wont to regret that they could not reserve the most dangerous missions for themselves alone. The other officers and the men noticed their leader's preoccupied mood. They liked him. The courage of his character was recognized among them; so they knew that this exceeding caution on his part meant that danger was at hand. How serious it was they could not possibly suspect; so, though they remained motionless and scarcely drew their breath, it was done intuitively. The soldiers looked by turns along the valley of the Couësnon, at the woods along the road, and at their commandant's stern face, trying to gather what their fate was to be, much as the dogs try to guess what the experienced sportsman means who gives them some order which they cannot understand. They looked at each other's eyes, and a smile spread from mouth to mouth.

As Hulot made his peculiar grimace, Beau-Pied, a young sergeant, who was regarded as the wit of the company, said in a low voice: "What the devil have we run ourselves into to make that old dragoon of a Hulot turn such a muddy face on us? He looks like a whole council of war."

Hulot flung a stern glance at Beau-Pied, and forthwith there was a sudden accession of the silence required of men under arms. In the middle of this awful pause the lagging footsteps of the conscripts were heard. The gravel under their feet gave out a dull monotonous sound that added a vague disagreeable feeling to the general anxiety, an indescribable feeling that can only be understood by those who, in the silence of night, have been victims of a terrible suspense, and have felt their hearts beat heavily with redoubled quickness at some monotonous recurring noise which has seemed to pour terror through them drop by drop. The commandant reached the middle of the road again. He was beginning to ask himself, "Am I deceived?" His rage concentrated itself already upon Marche-à-Terre and his stolid

tranquillity; it flashed in his eyes like lightning as he looked at him; but he discerned a savage irony in the Chouan's sullen gaze that convinced him that it would be better not to discontinue his precautionary measures. His captain, Merle, came up to him just then, after having executed Hulot's orders. The mute actors in this scene, which was like so many another that was to make this war one of the most dramatic ever known, were looking out impatiently for new sensations, curious to see any fresh manœuvres that should throw a light on obscure points of the military position, for their benefit.

"Captain," said the commandant, "we did well to put the small number of patriots that we can depend upon among the requisitionaries at the rear of the detachment. Take another dozen of stout fellows and put Sub-lieutenant Lebrun at the head of them; take them down quickly yourself to the rear of the detachment; they will support the patriots down there, and they will make the whole troop of rascals move on, and quickly too, and bring them up to the level of our own men in no time. I am waiting for you."

The captain disappeared among the troop. The commandant looked out four resolute men, whom he knew to be alert and active, and called them by a gesture only; he tapped his nose with his forefinger, and then pointed to each in turn by way of a friendly sign. The four approached him. "You served with me under Hoche," said he, "when we gave these scoundrels who call themselves *Chasseurs du Roi* a lesson, and you know their ways of hiding themselves so as to pepper the Blues."

All four soldiers held up their heads and pressed their lips together significantly at this praise of their quick-wittedness. There was a reckless acquiescence in the soldierly heroic faces which showed that since the beginning of the struggle between France and Europe, their thoughts had scarcely strayed beyond the limits of the cartridge pouch at their backs and the bayonet they carried in front. They looked curiously and attentively at the commandant.

"Very well," went on Hulot, who in an eminent degree possessed the art of speaking in the soldier's picturesque language, "stout fellows, such as we are, must never allow the Chouans to make fools of us; and there are Chouans about, or my name is not Hulot. Be off, the four of you, and beat up either side of the road. The detachment is going to slip its cable; keep well alongside of it. Try not to hand in your checks, and clear up this business for me. Sharp!"

He pointed out the dangerous heights above the road. By way of thanks, all four raised the backs of their hands before their old cocked hats; the turned-up brims, weather-beaten now and limp with age, had fallen over the crowns. One of them, Larose by name, a corporal that Hulot knew, said as he made the muzzle of his gun ring on the ground: "They shall have a solo on the clarinet, commandant."

They set out, two of them to the right, and the others to the left. It was not without an inward tremor that the company saw them disappear on either side of the way. The commandant shared in this anxiety; he believed that he had sent them to a certain death. He shuddered in spite of himself when he saw their hats no longer, and both officers and men heard the sound of their footsteps on the dead leaves gradually dying away with a feeling all the more acutely painful for being hidden so far beneath the surface. In war there are scenes like these, when four men sent into jeopardy cause more consternation than the thousands of corpses stretched upon the field at Jemappes. So many and so fleeting are the expressions of the military physiognomy that those who would fain depict them are obliged to call up memories of soldiers in the past, and to leave it to non-combatants to study their dramatic figures, for these stormy times were so rich in detail that any complete description of them could only be made at interminable length.

Just as the gleam of the bayonets of the four soldiers was no longer visible, Captain Merle came back after executing the commandant's orders with lightning speed. With two or three words of command Hulot set the rest of his troop in

order of battle in the middle of the road; then he gave the word to regain the summit of the Pèlerine, where his little advance guard was posted, and he himself followed last of all, walking backward, so that he might see the slightest change that should come over any of the principal points in that view which nature had made so enchanting, and man, so full of terrors.

Marche-à-Terre had followed all the commandant's manœuvres with indifferent eyes, but he had watched the two soldiers as they penetrated the woods that lay to the right with incredible keenness; and now, as Hulot reached the spot where Gérard stood on guard over him, Marche-à-Terre began to whistle two or three times in a way that imitated the shrill, far-reaching cry of the screech-owl.

The three notorious smugglers whose names have been already mentioned used to employ some of the notes of that cry at night to give warning of an ambush, of danger, or of anything else that concerned them. In this way the nickname *Chuin* arose, which, in the dialect of the country, means an owl, or screech-owl. A corruption of the word served to designate those who in the previous war had adopted the tactics and signals of the three brothers, so that when he heard the suspicious whistle the commandant stopped and fixed his gaze on Marche-à-Terre. He affected to be deceived by the Chouan's appearance of imbecility, that he might keep him at his side as a kind of barometer to indicate the enemy's movements. So he caught Gérard's hand as it was raised to despatch the Chouan, and posted two soldiers a few paces away from the spy, ordering them in loud and distinct tones to be ready to shoot him down if he attempted to make the slightest signal of any kind. In spite of his imminent peril, Marche-à-Terre showed no sort of perturbation, and the commandant, who was studying him, noticed this indifference.

"The chap isn't up to everything," he said to Gérard. "Aha! it is not so easy to read a Chouan's face; but this fellow's wish to exhibit his intrepidity has betrayed him. If

he had shammed fright, Gérard, I should have taken him for a nincompoop, you see; and there would have been a pair of us, he and I. I had come to the end of my tether. Ah, we shall be attacked! But let them come; I am ready now!"

The old soldier rubbed his hands triumphantly when he had muttered these words, and looked maliciously at Marche-à-Terre; then he locked his arms over his chest, took his stand in the middle of the road between his two favorite officers, and awaited the result of the measures he had taken. Sure of the issue, he looked his men over calmly.

"Oho! we are going to have a row," said Beau-Pied in a low voice; "the commandant is rubbing his hands."

Commandant Hulot and his detachment found themselves in one of those critical positions where life is really at stake, and when men of energetic character feel themselves in honor bound to show coolness and self-possession. Such times bring a man to the final test. The commandant, therefore, who knew the danger better than any of his officers, prided himself on appearing the coolest person present. With his eyes fixed alternately on the woods, the roadway, and Marche-à-Terre, he was expecting the general onslaught of the Chouans (who, as he believed, lay concealed all about them like goblins), with an unmoved face, but not without inward anguish. Just as the men's eyes were all turned upon his, slight creases appeared in the brown cheeks with the scars of smallpox upon them, the commandant screwed his lip sharply up to one side, blinked his eyes, a grimace which was understood to be a smile by his men, then he clapped Gérard on the shoulder, saying: "Now we have time to talk. What were you going to say to me just now?"

"What new crisis have we here, commandant?"

"It is nothing new," he answered in a low voice; "all Europe has a chance against us this time. While the Directors are squabbling among themselves like horses left in the stable without any oats, and are letting the government go all to pieces, they leave their armies unsupported. We are utterly ruined in Italy. Yes, my friends, we have evacuated

Mantua on the top of the disasters at la Trebbia, and Joubert has just lost the battle of Novi. I only hope Masséna will guard the Swiss passes, for Suwarroff is overrunning the country. We are beaten along the Rhine. Moreau has been sent out there by the Directory. He is a fine fellow, but is he going to keep the frontier? I wish he may, I am sure; but the coalition will crush us altogether at last, and unluckily the one general who could save us has gone to the devil down there in Egypt! And how is he to get back moreover? England is mistress of the seas."

"Bonaparte's absence does not trouble me, commandant," said Gérard, his young adjutant, whose superior faculties had been developed by a careful education. "Is our Revolution to end like that? We are bound to do more than merely defend the soil of France; ours is a double mission. Ought we not to keep alive the very soul of our country, the generous principles of liberty and independence, that human reason evoked by our Assemblies, which is winning its way, I hope, little by little? France is like a traveller with a light in her keeping; she must carry it in one hand and defend herself with the other; if your news is well founded, for these ten years past we have never been surrounded by so many who would seek to blow it out. Our doctrines and our country, all alike, are about to perish."

"Alas, yes!" sighed the commandant Hulot. "Those mountebanks of Directors have managed to quarrel with all the men who could have steered the vessel—Bernadotte, Carnot, and every one else down to citizen Talleyrand has abandoned us. There is only one good patriot left in fact, our friend Fouché, who has everything in his hands by police supervision. There is a man for you! He it was, too, who gave me warning in time of this insurrection. For all that, here we are in some pitfall or other, I am positive."

"Oh, if the army did not interfere a little in the government," said Gérard, "the lawyers would put us back in a worse position than we were in before the Revolution. Do those wretches understand how to make themselves obeyed?"

"I am always in fear that I shall hear of their treating with the Bourbon princes. *Tonnerre de Dieu!* If they came to an understanding, what a fix some of the rest of us would be in out here."

"No, no, commandant; we shall not come to that," said Gérard. "As you say, the army would make its voice heard; and so that the army does not pick its words out of Pichegru's dictionary, we shall not have been cutting ourselves to pieces for ten years, I hope, over carding the flax for others to spin."

"Well," said Captain Merle, "let us always conduct ourselves here like good patriots, and try to cut off the Chouan communications with la Vendée; for if once they hear that England has a finger in the matter, I would not answer for the cap of our Republic, one and indivisible."

Just then the cry of a screech-owl, heard from some considerable distance, interrupted the conversation. Still more uneasily the commandant again furtively scrutinized Marche-à-Terre; there was no sign of animation, so to speak, in his stolid face. The recruits, drawn up together by one of the officers, were mustered like a herd of cattle in the crown of the road, some thirty paces from the troops in order of battle. Behind them again, at the distance of some ten paces, came the soldiers and patriots commanded by Lieutenant Lebrun. The commandant ran his eyes over his array, and gave a last glance at the picket posted in advance up the road. Satisfied with this disposition of his forces, he turned to give the order to march, when he saw the tricolor cockades of two of his scouts returning from the search of the woods that lay on the left. As he saw no sign whatever of the two sent to reconnoitre the right-hand woods, the commandant determined to wait for them.

"Perhaps the trouble is coming from that quarter," he remarked to his two officers as he pointed out the woods which seemed to have swallowed up his two *enfants perdus.*

While the two scouts were making some sort of report, Hulot ceased to watch Marche-à-Terre. The Chouan began

again to give a sharp whistle, a cry so shrill that it could be heard a long way off; and then, before either of his guards so much as saw what he was after, he dealt them each a blow from his whip-handle that stretched them on the roadside. All at once answering cries, or rather savage yells, startled the Republicans. A terrible fire was opened upon them from the wood that crowned the slope where the Chouan had been sitting, and seven or eight of their men fell. Five or six soldiers had taken aim at Marche-à-Terre, but none of them hit him. He had climbed the slope with the agility of a wild cat and disappeared in the woods above. His sabots rolled down into the ditch, and it was easy then to see upon his feet the great iron-bound shoes which were always worn by the *Chasseurs du Roi*. At the first alarm given by the Chouans, all the recruits had made a dash for it into the woods on the right, like a flock of birds scared by the approach of a passer-by.

"Fire on those rascals!" roared the commandant.

The company fired, but the recruits were well able to screen themselves from the musket-shots. Every man set his back against a tree, and before the muskets had been reloaded, they were all out of sight.

"Issue warrants for a Departmental Legion, eh?" Hulot said to Gérard. "One would have to be as big a fool as a Director to put any dependence on a requisition from this district. The Assemblies would show more sense if they would send us clothing, and money, and ammunition, and give up voting reinforcements."

"These swine like their bannocks better than ammunition bread," said Beau-Pied, the wag of the company.

At his words, hooting and yells of derisive laughter went up from the Republican troops, crying shame on the deserters, but a sudden silence followed all at once. The soldiers saw the two scouts who had been sent by the commandant to search the woods on the right, painfully toiling down the slope, the less injured man supporting his comrade, whose blood drenched the earth. The two poor fellows had

scarcely reached the middle of the bank when Marche-à-Terre showed his hideous face. His aim was so certain that, with one shot, he hit them both, and they rolled heavily down into the ditch. His huge head had barely shown itself before the muzzles of some thirty muskets were levelled at him; but he had disappeared like a phantom behind the ominous gorse bushes. All these things, which it takes so many words to describe, came to pass almost in a moment; and in a moment more the patriots and soldiers of the rearguard came up with the rest of the escort.

"Forward!" shouted Hulot.

The company rapidly gained the high and exposed position where the picket had been placed. The commandant then drew up his forces in order of battle, but he saw no further hostile demonstration on the part of the Chouans, and thought that the sole object of the ambuscade was the deliverance of his conscripts.

"Their cries tell me that they are not in great force. Let us march double quick. We may possibly get to Ernée before we have them down upon us."

A patriot conscript overheard the words, left the ranks, and stood before Hulot.

"General," said he, "I've seen some of this sort of fighting before as a Counter-Chouan. May I put in a word or two?"

"Here's one of these barrack-lawyers," the commandant muttered in Merle's ears; "they always think they are on for hearing. Go on; argue away," he added to the young man from Fougères.

"Commandant, the Chouans have brought arms, of course, for those men that they have just recruited. If we have to run for it now, they will be waiting for us at every turn in the woods, and will pick us off to a man before we can get to Ernée. We must argue, as you say, but it must be with cartridges; then, during the skirmish, which will last longer than you look for, one of us could go for the National Guard and the Free Companies stationed at Fou-

gères. We may be conscripts, but you shall see by that time that we are not carrion-kites."

"Then you think the Chouans are here in some force!"

"Judge for yourself, citizen-commandant."

He led Hulot to a spot on the plateau where the sand had been disturbed, as if a rake had been over it; and, after calling Hulot's attention to this, led him some little way along a footpath where traces of the passage of a large body of men were distinctly visible. Leaves had been trodden right into the trampled earth.

"That will be the gars from Vitré," said the Fougèrais; "they have gone to join the Bas-Normands."

"What is your name, citizen?" asked Hulot.

"Gudin, commandant."

"Well, then, Gudin, I shall make you corporal of your townsmen here. You are a long-headed fellow, it seems to me. I leave it to you to pick out one of your comrades, who must be sent to Fougères, and you yourself will keep close beside me. But, first, there are these two poor comrades of ours that those brigands have laid out on the road there—you and some of your conscripts can go and take their guns, and clothes, and cartridge-boxes. You shall not stop here to take shots without returning them."

The brave Fougèrais went to strip the dead, protected by an energetic fire kept up upon the woods by the whole company. It had its effect, for the party returned without losing a man.

"These Bretons will make good soldiers," said Hulot to Gérard, "if their mess happens to take their fancy."

Gudin's messenger set out at a trot down a pathway that turned off to the left through the woods. The soldiers, absorbed in examining their weapons, prepared for the coming struggle. The commandant passed them in review, smiled encouragingly, and, placing himself with his two favorite officers a step or two in advance, awaited the onset of the Chouans with composure.

Silence prevailed again, but it was only for a moment.

Then three hundred Chouans, dressed exactly like the requisitionaries, issued from the woods to the right. They came on in no order, uttering fearful cries, and occupied the width of the road before the little battalion of Blues. The commandant divided his troops into two equal parts, each part presenting a front of ten men to the enemy. Between these divisions, and in the centre, he placed himself at the head of his band of twelve hastily equipped conscripts. The little army was protected by two wings of twenty-five men each, under the command of Gérard and Merle. These officers were to take the Chouans adroitly in flank, and to prevent them from scattering about the country—*s'égailler* they call the movement in the *patois* of this district, when every peasant would take up his position where he could shoot at the Blues without exposing himself, and the Republican troops were utterly at a loss to know where to have their enemies.

These arrangements, made with the rapidity demanded by the circumstances, seemed to infuse the commandant's self-reliance into the men, and all advanced upon the Chouans in silence. At the end of the few seconds needed for the two bodies of men to approach each other, there was a sudden discharge at close quarters which scattered death through either rank; but in a moment the Republican wings had wheeled and taken the Chouans in flank. These latter had no means of opposing them, and the hot, pertinacious fire of their enemies spread death and disorder in their midst. This manœuvre nearly redressed the balance of the numbers on either side; but the courage and firmness of the Chouan character were equal to all tests. They did not give way; their losses did not shake them; they closed their ranks and tried to surround the little, dark, compact lines of Blues, who appeared in the narrow space they occupied like a queen bee in the midst of a swarm.

Then they engaged in one of those horrible struggles at close quarters, when the rattle of musketry almost ceases, and the click of the bayonets is heard instead, and the ranks

meet man to man; and, courage being equal on either side, the victory is won by sheer force of numbers. At first the Chouans would have carried all before them if the two wings under Merle and Gérard had not brought two or three volleys to bear slantwise on the enemy's rear. By rights the two wings should have stayed where they were, and continued to pick off their formidable foes in this adroit manner; but the sight of the heroic battalion, now hemmed in on all sides by the *Chasseurs du Roi*, excited them. They flung themselves like madmen into the struggle on the roadway, bayonet in hand, and redressed the balance again for a few moments. Both sides gave themselves up to a furious zeal, aggravated by the ferocious cruelty of party-spirit that made this war an exception. Each became absorbed by his own peril, and was silent. The place seemed chill and dark with death. The only sounds that broke the silence, and rose above the clash of weapons and the grating noise of the gravel underfoot, were the deep, hollow groans of those who fell badly wounded, or of the dying as they lay. In the Republican centre the dozen conscripts defended the person of the commandant (who issued continued warnings and orders manifold) with such courage that more than once a soldier here and there had cried "Bravo, conscripts!"

Hulot, the imperturbable and wide-awake, soon noticed among the Chouans a man, also surrounded by picked troops, who appeared to be their leader. It seemed to him very needful to make quite sure of this officer; now and again he made efforts to distinguish his features, hidden by a crowd of broad hats and red caps, and in this way he recognized Marche-à-Terre beside the officer, repeating his orders in a hoarse voice, while he kept his carbine in constant use. Hulot grew tired of the repeated annoyance. He drew his sword, encouraged his requisitionaries, and dashed so furiously upon the Chouan centre that he penetrated their ranks and caught a glimpse of the officer, whose face, unluckily, was hidden by a large felt hat with a white cockade. But the stranger, taken somewhat aback by this bold onset,

suddenly raised his hat. Hulot seized the opportunity to make a rapid survey of his opponent.

The young chief, who seemed to Hulot to be about twenty-five years of age, wore a short green cloth shooting coat. The white sash at his waist held pistols, the heavy shoes he wore were bound with iron like those of the Chouans; gaiters reaching to the knee, and breeches of some coarse material, completed the costume. He was of middle height, but well and gracefully made. In his anger at seeing the Blues so near to him, he thrust on his hat again and turned toward them, but Marche-à-Terre and others of his party surrounded him at once, in alarm. Still, through gaps in the crowd of faces that pressed about the young man and came between them, Hulot felt sure he saw a broad red ribbon on the officer's unfastened coat, that showed the wearer to be a Knight Commander of the Order of St. Louis. The commandant's eyes, at first attracted by the long-forgotten royal decoration, were turned next upon a face, which he lost sight of again in a moment, for the risks of battle compelled him to watch closely over the safety and the movements of his own little band. He had scarcely time to see the color of the sparkling eyes, but the fair hair and delicately cut features tanned by the sun did not escape him, nor the gleam of a bare neck that seemed all the whiter by contrast with a loosely knotted black scarf. There was the enthusiasm and excitement of a soldier in the bearing of the young leader, and of a type of soldier for whom a certain dramatic element seems desirable in a fight. The hand that swung the sword-blade aloft in the sunlight was well gloved, vigor was expressed in the face, and a certain refinement also in a like degree. In his high-wrought exaltation, set off by all the charms of youth and graciousness of manner, he seemed to be a fair ideal type of the French noblesse; while Hulot, not four paces from him, might have been the embodiment of the energetic Republic for which the veteran was fighting. His stern face, his blue uniform faced with the worn red facings, the grimy epaulets that hung back over his shoulders, ex-

pressed the character and the deficiencies of their owner. The graceful attitude and expression of the younger man were not lost upon Hulot, who shouted as he tried to reach him—"Here you, ballet-dancer! come a little nearer, so that I may get a chance at you!"

The Royalist leader, irritated by the momentary check, made a desperate forward movement; but the moment his own men saw the danger he was thus incurring, they all flung themselves upon the Blues. A clear, sweet voice suddenly rang out above the din of conflict—"Here it was that the sainted Lescure fell! Will you not avenge him?"

At these magical words the Chouan onset became terrible; the little troop of Republican soldiers kept their line unbroken with the greatest difficulty.

"If he had not been a youngster," said Hulot to himself, as he gave way step by step, "we should not have been attacked at all. When did Chouans offer battle before? But so much the better, they won't shoot us down like dogs along the road."

He raised his voice till the woods echoed with the words—"Come, look alive, men; are we going to let ourselves be fooled by these bandits?"

The verb is but a feeble substitute for that of the gallant commander's choice, but old hands will be able to insert the genuine word, which certainly possesses a more soldierly flavor.

"Gérard, Merle," the commandant continued, "call in your men, form them in columns, and fall on their rear, fire on these curs, and make an end of them!"

Hulot's orders were carried out with great difficulty; for the young chief heard the voice of his antagonist, and shouted—"Saint Anne of Auray! Don't let them get away! Scatter yourselves, my gars!"

As either wing commanded by Merle and Gérard withdrew from the thick of the fray, each little column was pertinaciously followed by Chouans in greatly superior numbers. The old goat-skins surrounded the men under

Merle and Gérard on all sides, once more uttering those threatening cries of theirs, like the howls of wild beasts.

"Silence, gentlemen!" shouted Beau-Pied; "we can't hear ourselves being killed."

The joke put fresh heart into the Blues.

The fighting was no longer concentrated upon a single point, the Republicans defended themselves in three different places on the plateau of the Pèlerine, and the valleys, so quiet hitherto, re-echoed with the sound of the firing. Hours might have passed and left the issue still undecided, or the struggle might have come to an end for lack of combatants. The courage of Blues and Chouans was evenly matched, and the fierce desire of battle was surging as it were from the one side to the other, when far away and faintly there sounded the tap of a drum, and from the direction of the sound the corps that it heralded must be crossing the valley of the Couësnon.

"That is the National Guard from Fougères!" cried Gudin; "Vannier must have fallen in with them!"

His voice reached the young leader and his ferocious aide-de-camp; the Royalists began to give way; but a cry like a wild beast's from Marche-à-Terre promptly checked them. Two or three orders were given in a low voice by the chief, and translated by Marche-a-Terre into Bas-Breton for the Chouans; and the retreat began, conducted with a skill which baffled the Republicans, and even their commandant. In the first place, such of the Chouans as were not disabled drew up in line at the word, and presented a formidable front to the enemy, while the wounded and the remainder of them fell behind to load their guns. Then all at once, with a swiftness of which Marche-à-Terre had given an example, the wounded from the rear gained the summits of the bank on the right side of the road, and were followed thither by half of the remaining Chouans, who clambered nimbly up, and manned the top of the bank, only their energetic heads being visible to the Blues below. Once there, they made a sort of rampart of the trees, and thence they brought the

barrels of their guns to bear upon the remnant of the escort, who had rapidly drawn up in obedience to repeated orders from Hulot, in such a way as to present a front equal to that of the Chouans, who were still occupying the road. These last fell back, still disputing the ground, and wheeled so as to bring themselves under cover of the fire of their own party. When they reached the ditch which lay by the roadside, they scrambled in their turn up the steep slope, whose top was held by their own comrades, and so rejoined them, steadily supporting the murderous fire of the Republicans, which filled the ditch with dead bodies, the men from the height of the scarp replying the while with a fire no less deadly.

Just then the National Guard from Fougères arrived at a run on the scene of the conflict, and with their presence the affair was at an end. A few excited soldiers and the National Guards were leaving the footpath to follow them up in the woods, but the commandant called to them in his soldier's voice, "Do you want to be cut to bits over there?"

They came up with the Republican troops, who were left in possession of the field indeed, but only after heavy losses. Then all the old hats went aloft on the points of their bayonets, while every soldier's voice cried twice over, "Long live the Republic!" Even the wounded men lying by the roadside shared alike in the enthusiasm, and Hulot squeezed his lieutenant's hand as he said: "One might call that pluck, eh?"

Merle was ordered to bury the dead in a ravine by the wayside. Carts and horses were requisitioned from neighboring farms for the wounded, whom their comrades hastened to lay on the clothing taken from the dead. Before they set out, the National Guard from Fougères brought a Chouan to Hulot; the man was dangerously wounded, and had been found lying exhausted at the foot of the slope, up which his party had made their escape.

"Thanks for this prompt stroke of yours, citizens," said the commandant. "*Tonnerre de Dieu!* we should have had

a bad quarter of an hour but for you. You must look out for yourselves now; the war has broken out in earnest. Good-day, gentlemen!"

Hulot turned to his prisoner.

"What is your general's name?"

"The Gars."

"Who? Marche-à-Terre?"

"No, the Gars."

"And where does the Gars come from?"

To this question the *Chasseur du Roi* made no reply; his wild, weather-beaten face was drawn with pain; he took his beads and began to mutter a prayer.

"The Gars is that young *ci-devant* with the black cravat, no doubt. He has been sent over here by the Tyrant and his allies Pitt and Cobourg—"

Here the Chouan, who had so far seemed unconscious of what was going on, raised his head at the words to say proudly: "Sent by God and the King!"

The energy with which he spoke exhausted his strength. The commandant turned away with a frown. He saw the difficulty of interrogating a dying man, a man, moreover, who bore signs of a gloomy fanaticism in every line of his face. Two of his men stepped forward and took aim at the Chouan; they were friends of the two poor fellows whom Marche-à-Terre had despatched so brutally with a blow from his whip at the outset, for both were lying dead at the road-side. The Chouan's steady eyes did not flinch before the barrels of the muskets that they pointed at him, although they fired close to his face. He fell; but when the men came up to strip the corpse, he shouted again for the last time, "Long live the King!"

"All right, curmudgeon," said Clef-des-Cœurs. "Be off to your Holy Virgin and get your supper. Didn't he come back and say to our faces, 'Long live the Tyrant,' when we thought it was all over with him?"

"Here, sir," said Beau-Pied; "here are the brigand's papers."

"Look here, though," cried Clef-des-Cœurs; "here's a fellow been enlisted by the Saints above; he wears their badge here on his chest!"

Hulot and some others made a group round the Chouan's naked body, and saw upon the dead man's breast a flaming heart tattooed in a bluish color, a token that the wearer had been initiated into the Brotherhood of the Sacred Heart. Under the symbol Hulot made out "*Marie Lambrequin*," evidently the Chouan's own name.

"You see that, Clef-des-Cœurs?" asked Beau-Pied. "Well, you would guess away for a century and never find out what that part of his accoutrements means."

"How should *I* know about the Pope's uniforms," replied Clef-des-Cœurs.

"You good-for-nothing flint-crusher, will you never be any wiser? Can't you see that they promised the chap there that he should come to life again? He painted his gizzard so as to be known by it." There was some ground for the witticism. Hulot himself could not help joining in the general laughter that followed.

By this time Merle had buried the dead, and the wounded had been laid in the carts as carefully as might be. The other soldiers formed in a double file, one on either side of the improvised ambulance wagons, and in this manner they went down the other side of the mountain, the outlook over Maine before their eyes, and the lovely valley of the Pèlerine, which rivals that of the Couësnon. Hulot and his two friends Merle and Gérard followed slowly after the men, wishing that they might, without further mishap, reach Ernée, where the wounded could be attended to.

This engagement, though scarcely heard of in France, where great events were even then taking place, attracted some attention in the West, where this second rising filled every one's thoughts. A change was remarked in the methods adopted by the Chouans in the opening of the war: never before had they attacked so considerable a body of troops. Hulot's conjectures led him to suppose that the young Roy-

alist whom he had seen must be "the Gars," a new general sent over to France by the princes, and that his own name and title were concealed after the custom of Royalist leaders by that kind of nickname which is called a *nom-de-guerre.* This circumstance made him as uneasy after his dubious victory as he had been on his first suspicion of an ambuscade; more than once he turned to look at the plateau of La Pèlerine, which he was leaving behind, while even yet at intervals the faint sound of a drum reached him, for the National Guard was going down the valley of the Couësnon, while they themselves were descending the valley of La Pèlerine.

"Can either of you suggest their motive for attacking us?" he began abruptly, addressing his two friends. "Fighting is a kind of trade in musket shots for them, and I cannot see that they have made anything in our case. They must have lost at least a hundred men; while we," he added, screwing up his right cheek, and winking his eyes by way of a smile, "have not lost sixty. By Heaven, I can't understand the speculation! The rogues need never have attacked us at all. We should have gone past the place like letters by the post, and I can't see what good it did them to make holes in our fellows."

He pointed dejectedly to the wounded as he spoke. "May be they wanted to wish us good-day," he added.

"But they have secured a hundred and fifty of our lambs," said Merle, thinking of the recruits.

"The requisitionaries could have hopped off into the woods like frogs; we should not have gone in to fish them out again, at any rate not after a volley or two. No, no," went on Hulot; "there is something more behind."

He turned again to look at La Pèlerine.

"Stay," he cried; "look there!"

Far away as they were from the unlucky plateau by this time, the practiced eyes of the three officers easily made out Marche-a-Terre and others in possession of the place.

"Quick march!" cried Hulot to his troop. "Stir your shanks and make those horses move on faster than that. Are

their legs frozen? Have the beasts also been sent over by Pitt and Cobourg?" The pace of the little troop was quickened by the words.

"I hope to Heaven we shall not have to clear up this mystery at Ernée with powder and ball," he said to the two officers; "it is too dark a business for me to see through readily. I am afraid we shall be told that the king's subjects have cut off our communications with Mayenne."

The very strategical problem which made Hulot's mustache bristle, gave anxiety, no whit less keen, to the men whom he had discovered upon the summit of La Pèlerine. The drum of the National Guard from Fougères was hardly out of earshot, the Blues had only reached the bottom of the long steep road below, when Marche-a-Terre cheerfully gave the cry of the screech-owl again, and the Chouans reappeared, but in smaller numbers. Some of them must have been occupied in bandaging the wounded at the village of La Pèlerine, on the side of the hills overlooking the valley of the Couësnon. Two or three *Chasseurs du Roi* came up to Marche-a-Terre.

Four paces away the young noble sat musing on a granite bowlder, absorbed by the numerous thoughts to which his difficult enterprise gave rise in him. Marche-a-Terre shaded the sun from his eyes with his hand as he dejectedly followed the progress of the Republicans down the valley of La Pèlerine. His small keen black eyes were trying to discover what was passing on the horizon where the road left the valley for the opposite hillside.

"The Blues will intercept the mail," said one of the chiefs sullenly, who stood nearest to Marche-a-Terre.

"By St. Anne of Auray!" asked another, "why did you make us fight? To save your own skin?"

Marche-a-Terre's glance at the speaker was full of malignity; he rapped the butt of his heavy carbine on the ground. "Am I in command?" said he. Then after a pause he went on, "If all of you had fought as I did, not one of the Blues would have escaped," and he pointed to the remnant of

Hulot's detachment below, "and perhaps then the coach would have come through as far as here."

"Do you suppose," asked a third speaker, "that the idea of escorting it, or stopping it either, would have crossed their minds if we had let them pass peaceably? You wanted to save your own hide, you that would have it the Blues were not on the march. He must save his own bacon," he went on, turning to the others, "and the rest of us must bleed for it, and we are like to lose twenty thousand francs in good gold coin besides."

"Bacon yourself!" cried Marche-a-Terre, drawing back and bringing his carbine to bear on his adversary. "It's not that you hate the Blues, but that you are fond of money. You shall die without confession, do you hear? A damned rascal that hasn't taken the sacrament this twelvemonth past."

The Chouan turned white with rage at this insult, a deep growl came from his chest as he raised his musket and pointed it at Marche-a-Terre. The young leader rushed between them, knocked the firearms out of their hands by striking up their weapons with the stock of his carbine, and demanded an explanation of the quarrel. The dispute had been carried on in Bas-Breton, with which he was not very familiar.

Marche-a-Terre explained, and ended his discourse with, "It's the more shame to them that bear a grudge against me, my lord marquis, for I left Pille-Miche behind, and very likely he will keep the coach out of these robbers' clutches." He pointed to the Blues, for these faithful defenders of altar and throne were all brigands and murderers of Louis XVI.

"What?" cried the young man angrily. "Do you mean to say you are waiting here to stop a coach? You cowards, who could not gain the victory in the first encounter with me for your commander! How is victory possible with such intentions? So those who fight for God and the King are pillagers? By St. Anne of Auray! we are making war on the Republic and not on diligences. Any one guilty of such disgraceful actions in future will not be pardoned, and shall

not benefit by the favors destined for brave and faithful servants of the King."

A murmur like a growl arose from the band. It was easy to see that the authority of the new leader, never very sure over these undisciplined troops, had been compromised. Nothing of this was lost upon the young man, who cast about him for a means of saving his orders from discredit, when the sound of approaching horse-hoofs broke the silence. Every head was turned in the direction whence the sound seemed to come. A young woman appeared, mounted sidewise upon a little horse, her pace quickened to a gallop as soon as she saw the young man.

"What is the matter?" she asked, looking by turns at the chief and the assembled Chouans.

"Would you believe it, madame, they are waiting to plunder the coach that runs between Mayenne and Fougères, just as we have liberated our gars from Fougères in a skirmish which has cost us a good many lives, without our being able to demolish the Blues."

"Very well, but where is the harm?" asked the young lady, whose woman's tact had revealed the secret of this scene to her. "You have lost some men, you say; we shall never run short of them. The mail is carrying money, and we are always short of that. We will bury our men, who will go to heaven, and we will take the money, which will go into the pockets of these good fellows. What is the objection?"

Every face among the Chouans beamed with approval at her words.

"Is there nothing in this to make you blush?" said the young man in a low voice. "Are you in such straits for money that you have to take the road for it?"

"I am so in want of it, marquis, that I could put my heart in pledge for it, I think, if it were still in my keeping," she said, smiling coquettishly at him. "Where can you come from to think of employing Chouans without allowing them to plunder the Blues now and again? Don't you

know the proverb, 'Thievish as an owl,' and what else is a Chouan? Besides," she went on, raising her voice, "is it not a righteous action? Have not the Blues robbed us, and taken the property of the Church?"

Again a murmur from the Chouans greeted her words, a very different sound from the growl with which they had answered the marquis. The color on the young man's brow grew darker, he stepped a little aside with the lady, and began with the lively petulance of a well bred man— "Will these gentlemen come to the Vivetière on the appointed day?"

"Yes," she answered, "all of them, l'Intimé, Grand Jacques, and possibly Ferdinand."

"Then permit me to return thither, for I cannot sanction such brigandage by my presence. Yes, madame, I say it is brigandage. A noble may allow himself to be robbed, but—"

"Very well then," she broke in; "I shall have your share, and I am obliged to you for giving it up to me. The prize money will put me in funds. My mother has delayed sending money to me for so long that I am fairly desperate."

"Good-by," said the marquis, and he disappeared. The lady hurried quickly after him.

"Why won't you stay with me?" she asked, with a glance half tyrannous, half tender; such a glance as a woman gives to a man over whom she exerts a claim, when she desires to make her wishes known to him.

"Are you not going to plunder the coach?"

"Plunder?" she repeated; "what a strange expression! Let me explain—"

"Not a word," he said, taking both her hands and kissing them with a courtier's ready gallantry. "Listen to me," he went on, after a pause, "if I were to stay here while they stop the coach, our people would kill me, for I should—"

"They would not kill you," she answered quickly; "they would tie your hands together, always with due respect to your rank; and after levying upon the Republicans a contri-

bution sufficient for their equipment and maintenance, and for some purchases of gunpowder, they would again obey you blindly."

"And you would have me command here? If my life is necessary to the cause for which I am fighting, you must allow me to save my honor as a commander. I can pass over this piece of cowardice if it is done in my absence. I will come back again to be your escort."

He walked rapidly away. The young lady heard the sound of his footsteps with evident vexation. When the sound of his tread on the dead rustling leaves had died away, she waited a while like one stupefied, then she hurried back to the Chouans. An abrupt scornful gesture escaped her; she said to Marche-a-Terre, who was aiding her to dismount, "The young man wants to open war on the Republic in regular form!—Ah, well, he will alter his mind in a day or two. But how he has treated me!" she said to herself after a pause.

She sat down on the rock where the marquis had been sitting, and waited the coming of the coach in silence. It was not one of the least significant signs of the times that a young and noble lady should be thus brought by violent party feeling into the struggle between the monarchies and the spirit of the age, impelled by the strength of those feelings to assist in deeds, to which she yet was (so to speak) not an accessory, led like many another by an exaltation of soul that sometimes brings great things to pass. Many a woman, like her, played a part in those troubled times; sometimes it was a sorry one, sometimes the part of a heroine. The Royalist cause found no more devoted and active emissaries than among such women as these.

In expiation of the errors of devotion, or for the mischances of the false position in which these heroines of their cause were placed, perhaps none suffered so bitterly as the lady at that moment seated on her slab of granite by the wayside; yet even in her despair she could not but admire the noble pride and the loyalty of the young chief. Insen-

sibly she fell to musing deeply. Bitter memories awoke that made her look longingly back to early and innocent days, and regret that she had not fallen a victim to this Revolution, whose progress such weak hands as hers could never stay.

The coach, which had counted for something in the Chouan attack, had left the village of Ernée some moments before the two parties began skirmishing. Nothing reveals the character of a country more clearly than its means of communication. Looked at in this light, the coach deserves special attention. The Revolution itself was powerless to destroy it; it is going yet in our own day.

When Turgot resumed the monopoly of conveyance of passengers throughout France, which Louis XIV. had granted to a company, he started the fresh enterprise which gave his name to the coaches or *turgotines;* and then out into the provinces went the old chariots of Messrs. de Vousges, Chauteclaire, and the widow Lacombe, to do service upon the highways. One of these miserable vehicles came and went between Mayenne and Fougères. They were called *turgotines* out of pure perversity and by way of antiphrasis; perhaps a dislike for the minister who started the innovation, or a desire to mimic Paris, suggested the appellation.

This *turgotine* was a crazy cabriolet, with two enormous wheels; its back seat, which scarcely afforded room for two fairly stout people, served also as a box for carrying the mails. Some care was required not to overload the feeble structure; but if travellers carried any luggage, it had to lie in the bottom of the coach, a narrow boxlike hole shaped like a pair of bellows, where their feet and legs were already cramped for room. The original color of the body and the wheels offered an insoluble enigma to the attention of passengers. Two leather curtains, unmanageable in spite of their long service, protected the sufferers from wind and weather. The driver, seated in front on a rickety bench, as in the wretchedest chaises about Paris, was perforce included in the conversation, by reason of his peculiar position

among his victims, biped and quadruped. There were fantastic resemblances between the vehicle and some decrepit old man who has come through so many bronchial attacks and apoplectic seizures that Death seems to respect him. It went complainingly, and creaked at every other moment. Like a traveller overtaken by heavy slumber, it lurched backward and forward, as if it would fain have resisted the strenuous efforts of the little Breton horses that dragged it over a tolerably uneven road. This relic of a bygone time held three passengers; their conversation had been interrupted at Ernée while the horses were changed, and was now resumed as they left the place.

"What makes you think that the Chouans will show themselves out here?" asked the driver. "They have just told me at Ernée that the commandant Hulot had not yet left Fougères."

"It's all very well for you, friend," said the youngest of the three; "you risk nothing but your own skin. If you were known as a good patriot and carried three hundred crowns about you, as I do, you wouldn't take things so easily."

"In any case, you are very imprudent," said the driver, shaking his head.

"You may count your sheep and yet the wolf will get them," said the second person. He was dressed in black, looked about forty years of age, and seemed to be a *recteur* thereabout. His double chin and florid complexion marked him out as belonging to the Church. Short and stout though he was, he displayed a certain agility each time he got in or out of the conveyance.

"Are you Chouans?" cried the owner of the three hundred crowns. His voluminous goat-skin cloak covered breeches of good cloth and a very decent waistcoat, all signs of a well-to-do farmer. "By the soul of St. Robespierre," he went on, "you shall be well received. . . ."

He looked from the driver to the rector, and showed them both the pistols at his waist.

"Bretons are not to be frightened that way," said the curé; "and besides that, do we look as if we wanted your money?"

Each time the word money was mentioned the driver became silent. The *recteur's* wits were keen enough to make him suspect that the patriot had no money, and that there was some cash in the keeping of their charioteer.

"Have you much of a load, Coupiau?" he inquired.

"Next to nothing, as you may say, Monsieur Gudin," replied the driver.

Monsieur Gudin looked inquiringly from Coupiau to the patriot at this, but both countenances were alike imperturbable.

"So much the better for you," answered the patriot. "I shall take my own measures for protecting my money if anything goes wrong."

This direct assumption of despotic authority provoked Coupiau into replying roughly: "I am the master here in the coach, and so long as I take you to—"

"Are you a patriot or a Chouan?" interrupted his adversary sharply.

"I am neither," answered Coupiau; "I am a postilion, and, what is more, a Breton; and therefore I am not afraid of Blues nor of gentlemen."

"Gentlemen of the road, you mean," said the patriot sardonically.

"They only take what others have taken from them," put in the *recteur* quickly, while the eyes of either traveller stared at the other as if to penetrate into either's brain. In the interior of the coach sat a third passenger, who remained absolutely silent through the thick of the debate. Neither the driver, the patriot, nor Gudin himself took the slightest heed of this nonentity. As a matter of fact, he was one of those tiresome and inconvenient people who travel by coach as passively as a calf that is carried with its legs tied up to a neighboring market. At the outset they possess themselves of at least the space allotted to them by the regulations, and end by sleeping without consideration or humanity

on their neighbors' shoulders. The patriot, Gudin, and the driver had let him alone, thinking that he was asleep, as soon as they had ascertained that it was useless to attempt to converse with a man whose stony countenance bore the records of a life spent in measuring clls of cloth, and a mind bent solely upon buying cheap and selling dear. Yet, in the corner where he lay curled up, a pair of china-blue eyes opened from time to time; the stout, little man had viewed each speaker in turn with alarm, doubt, and mistrust, but he seemed to stand in fear of his travelling companions, and to trouble himself very little about Chouans. The driver and he looked at one another like a pair of Freemasons. Just then the firing began at La Pèlerine; Coupiau stopped in dismay, not knowing what to do.

"Oh, ho!" said the churchman, who seemed to grasp the situation; "this is something serious. There are a lot of people about."

"The question is, who will get the best of it, M. Gudin?" cried Coupiau, and this time the same anxiety was seen on all faces.

"Let us put up at the inn down there, and hide the coach till the affair is decided," suggested Coupiau.

This advice seemed so sound that Coupiau acted upon it, and with the patriot's help concealed the coach behind a pile of fagots.

The supposed *recteur* found an opportunity of whispering to Coupiau: "Has he really any money?"

"Eh, M. Gudin, if all he has found its way into your reverence's pockets they would not be very heavy."

The Republicans, hurrying to reach Ernée, came past the inn without stopping there. The sound of their rapid march brought Gudin and the innkeeper to the door to watch them curiously. All at once the stout ecclesiastic made a dash at a soldier who was lagging behind.

"Eh?" he cried, "Gudin! Are you really going with the Blues? Infatuated boy! Do you know what you are about?"

"Yes, uncle," answered the corporal; "I have sworn to fight for France!"

"But your soul is in danger, scapegrace," cried his uncle, appealing to the religious scruples that are so strong in Breton hearts.

"Well, uncle, I won't say but that if the king had put himself at the head of his—"

"Idiot! Who is talking about the king? Will your Republic give preferment? It has upset everything! What kind of a career do you expect? Stay with us; we shall triumph some day or other, and then you shall be made councillor to some Parliament."

"A Parliament?" asked Gudin mockingly. "Good-by, uncle!"

"You shall not have the worth of three louis from me; I shall disinherit you," his uncle called angrily after him.

"Thanks," said the Republican, and they parted.

The fumes of cider to which the patriot had treated Coupiau while the little troop was passing had succeeded in obscuring the driver's intelligence somewhat; but he brightened up again when the landlord, having learned the upshot of the struggle, brought the news of a victory for the Blues. Coupiau brought out his coach upon the road again, and they were not long in showing themselves in the bottom of the valley of La Pèlerine. From the plateaus of Maine and of Brittany both it was easy to see the coach lying in the trough between two great waves, like a bit of wreckage after a storm at sea.

Hulot meanwhile had reached the summit of a slope that the Blues were climbing. La Pèlerine was still in sight, a long way off, so he turned to see if the Chouans still remained on the spot. The sunlight shining on the barrels of their muskets marked them out for him as a little group of bright dots. As he scanned the valley for the last time before quitting it for the valley of Ernée, he thought he could discern Coupiau's chariot on the highroad.

"Isn't that the Mayenne coach?" he asked of his two

comrades, who turned their attention to the old turgotine and recognized it perfectly well.

"Well, then, how was it that we did not meet it?" asked Hulot, as all three looked at each other in silence.

"Here is one more enigma," he went on; "but I begin to have an inkling of the truth."

Just at that very instant Marche-a-Terre also discovered the turgotine, and pointed it out to his comrades. A general outburst of rejoicing aroused the young lady from her musings. She came forward and saw the coach as it sped up the hillside with luckless haste. The miserable turgotine reached the plateau almost immediately; and the Chouans, who had hidden themselves, once more rushed out upon their prey in greedy haste. The dumb traveller slipped down into the bottom of the coach, and cowered there, trying to look like a package.

"Well," cried Coupiau from the box, "so you have smelled out the patriot there! He has money about him—a bag full of gold"; and as he spoke, he pointed out the small farmer, only to find that the Chouans hailed his remarks with a general roar of laughter and shouts of "Pille-Miche! Pille-Miche! Pille-Miche!" In the midst of the hilarity, which Pille-Miche himself echoed, Coupiau came down from the box in confusion. The famous Cibot, alias Pille-Miche, aided his companion to alight, and a respectful murmur arose.

"It is the Abbé Gudin!" cried several voices.

All hats went off at the name, and the Chouans knelt to ask for his blessing, which was gravely given.

Then the Abbé clapped Pille-Miche on the shoulder.

"He would deceive St. Peter himself, and steal away the keys of Paradise!" he cried. "But for him the Blues would have stopped us"; and, seeing the young lady, he spoke with her a few paces aside. Marche-a-Terre adroitly raised the seat of the coach, and with ferocious glee extracted a bag which, from its shape, evidently contained rouleaus of gold. He was not long about dividing the spoil. There were no

disputes, for each Chouan received his exact share. Lastly, he went up to the lady and the priest, and presented them with about six thousand francs.

"Can I take this with a clear conscience, Monsieur Gudin?" the lady asked, feeling within her the need of a sanction.

"Why not, madame? In former times, did not the Church approve the confiscation of Protestant goods? And we have stronger reasons for despoiling these revolutionaries, who deny God, plunder churches, and persecute religion!" Thereupon the Abbé added example to precept, and took without scruple the tenth—in new coin—which Marche-a-Terre offered him.

"However," he added, "I can now dedicate all I have to the service of God and the King. My nephew has cast in his lot with the Blues."

Coupiau was lamenting, and bewailed himself for a ruined man.

"Come along with us," said Marche-a-Terre; "you shall have your share."

"Every one will say that I set out to be robbed, if I go back again, and there are no traces of violence."

"Oh, if that is all you want," said Marche-a-Terre. He made a sign, and a volley of musketry riddled the turgotine. The old coach gave a cry so piteous at this salute that the Chouans, naturally superstitious, fell back in alarm, save Marche-a-Terre, who had seen the pale face of the mute traveller as it rose and fell inside.

"There is one more fowl yet in your coop," Marche-a-Terre said in a low voice to Coupiau. Pille-Miche, who saw what this meant, winked significantly.

"Yes," replied the driver; "but I made it a condition when I enlisted with you that I was to take this worthy man safe and sound to Fougères. I promised that in the name of the Saint of Auray."

"Who is he?" asked Pille-Miche.

"I can't tell you that," said Coupiau.

"Let him alone!" said Marche-a-Terre, nudging Pille-Miche with his elbow. "He swore by the holy Virgin of Auray, and a promise is a promise. But don't be in too great a hurry down the hill," the Chouan went on, addressing Coupiau; "we will catch you up for reasons of our own. I want to see the muzzle of that passenger of yours, and then we will give him a passport."

A horse was heard approaching La Pèlerine at full gallop. In a moment the young leader returned, and the lady promptly tried to conceal her hand with the bag in it.

"You need not scruple to keep that money," he said, drawing the lady's arm forward. "Here is a letter for you among those that awaited me at the Vivetière; it is from your mother."

He looked from the coach, which now descended the hill, to the Chouans, and added, "In spite of my haste, I am too late. Heaven send that my fears are ill grounded!"

"That is my poor mother's money!" cried the lady, when she had broken the seal of the letter and read the first few lines.

Sounds of smothered laughter came from the woods.

The young man himself could not help smiling at sight of the lady with a share of the plunder of her own property in her hands. She began to laugh herself.

"Well, I escape without blame for once, Marquis," she said. "Heaven be praised!"

"So you take all things with a light heart, even remorse?" the young man asked; but she flushed up with such evident contrition that he relented. The Abbé politely handed to her the tenth he had just received with as good a face as he could put upon it, and followed the young leader, who was returning by the way he had come. The young lady waited behind for a moment, and beckoned to Marche-a-Terre.

"You must go over toward Mortagne," she said in a low voice. "I know that the Blues must be continually transmitting large sums of money to Alençon for the prosecution

of the war. I give up to your comrades the money I have lost to-day; but I shall expect them to make it up to me. And before all things, the Gars is not to know the reason for this expedition; but if anything should go wrong, I will pacify him."

"Madame," the Marquis began, as she sat behind him *en croupe*, having made over her horse to the Abbé, "our friends in Paris are writing to tell us to keep a sharp look-out, for the Republic means to take us with craft and guile."

"Well, they might do worse," she replied; "it is not at all a bad idea of theirs. I shall take part now in the war, and meet the enemy on my own ground."

"Faith, yes," said the Marquis. "Pichegru warns me to be on my guard as to friendships of every kind. The Republic does me the honor to consider me more formidable than all the Vendeans put together, and thinks to get me into its grasp by working on my weaknesses."

"Are you going to suspect *me?*" she asked, tapping his breast with the hand by which she held him close to her.

"Would you be there, in my heart, if I could?" he said, and turned to receive a kiss on his forehead.

"Then we are like to run more risks from Fouché's police than from regular troops or from Counter-Chouans," was the Abbé's comment.

"Your reverence is quite right."

"Ah, ha!" the lady exclaimed, "so Fouché is going to send women against you? I am ready for them," she added after a brief pause, with a deeper note in her voice.

Meantime, some four gunshots from the lonely plateau which the leaders had just quitted, a drama was being enacted of a kind to be common enough on the highways for some time. Beyond the little village of La Pèlerine, Pille-Miche and Marche-a-Terre had again stopped the coach in a place where the road widened out. Coupiau, after a feeble resistance, came down from the box. The taciturn traveller, dragged from his hiding-place by the two Chouans, found himself on his knees in a bush of broom.

"Who are you?" asked Marche-a-Terre in threatening tones. The traveller did not answer at all till Pille-Miche recommenced his examination with a blow from the butt end of his musket. Then, with a glance at Coupiau, the man spoke—"I am Jacques Pinaud, a poor linen-draper." Coupiau seemed to think that he did not break his word by shaking his head. Pille-Miche acted on the hint, and pointed his musket at the traveller, while Marche-a-Terre deliberately uttered this terrible ultimatum—"You are a great deal too fat to know the pinch of poverty. If we have to ask you for your name again, here is my friend Pille-Miche with his musket, ready to earn the esteem and gratitude of your heirs. Now, who are you?" he asked after a pause.

"I am d'Orgemont of Fougères."

"Ha!" cried the two Chouans.

"*I* did not betray you, Monsieur d'Orgemont," said Coupiau. "The holy Virgin is my witness that I did my best to protect you."

"Since you are Monsieur d'Orgemont of Fougères," replied Marche-a-Terre with a fine affectation of respect, "of course we must let you go in peace. But still, as you are neither good Chouan nor genuine Blue (for you it was who bought the property of the Abbey of Juvigny), you are going to pay us three hundred crowns"—here he seemed to count the number of the party—and went on, "of six francs each. Neutrality is cheap at the price."

"Three hundred crowns of six francs each!" echoed the unlucky banker in chorus with Coupiau and Pille-Miche, each one with a different intonation.

"My dear sir, I am a ruined man," he cried. "This devil of a Republic taxes us up to the hilt, and this forced loan of a hundred millions has drained me dry."

"How much did your Republic want of you?"

"A thousand crowns, my dear sir," groaned the banker, thinking to be let off more easily.

"If your Republic wrings forced loans out of you to that

tune, you ought to throw in your lot with us. Our government will cost you less. Three hundred crowns—isn't your skin worth that?"

"Where am I to find them?"

"In your strong-box," said Pille-Miche. "And no clipped coins, mind you, or the fire shall nibble your finger ends!"

"Where am I to pay them over?"

"Your country-house at Fougères is not very far from the farm of Gibarry, where lives my cousin Galope-Chopine, otherwise big Cibot. You will make them over to him," said Pille-Miche.

"It is not business," urged d'Orgemont.

"What is that to us?" said Marche-a-Terre. "Mind this, if the money isn't paid to Galope-Chopine within a fortnight, we will pay you a call, and that will cure the gout in your feet, if it happens to trouble you. As for you, Coupiau," he turned to the driver, "your name in future will be *Mène-à-Bien.*"

With that the two Chouans departed. The traveller returned to the coach, and, with the help of Coupiau's whip, they bowled rapidly along to Fougères.

"If you had carried arms," Coupiau began, "we might have defended ourselves better."

"Simpleton!" replied the banker; "I have ten thousand francs there," and he held out his great shoes. "How is one to show fight with a large sum like that about one?"

Mène-a-Bien scratched his ear and sent a glance behind him, but his new friends were quite out of sight.

At Ernée, Hulot and his men halted a while to leave the wounded in the hospital in the little town, and finally arrived at Mayenne without any further annoyance. The next day put an end to the commandant's doubts as to the fate of the stage-coach, for everybody knew how it had been stopped and plundered.

A few days after, the authorities directed upon Mayenne enough patriot conscripts to fill the gaps in Hulot's demi-

brigade. Very soon one disquieting rumor followed another concerning the insurrection. There was complete revolt at all the points which had been centres of rebellion for Chouans and Vendeans in the late war. In Brittany the Royalists had made themselves masters of Pontorson, thus securing their communications with the sea. The little town of Saint James between Pontorson and Fougères had been taken by them, and it appeared that they meant to make it their temporary headquarters, their central magazine, and basis of operations. Thence they kept up a correspondence with Normandy and Morbihan in security. The Royalists of the three provinces were brought into concerted action by subaltern officers dispersed throughout the country, who recruited partisans for the Monarchy, and gave unity to their methods. Exactly similar reports came from La Vendée, where conspiracy was rife in the country under the guidance of four well-known leaders—the Counts of Fontaine, Chatillon, and Suzannet, and the Abbé Vernal. In Orne their correspondents were said to be the Chevalier de Valois, the Marquis of Esgrignon, and the Troisvilles. The real head and centre of the vast and formidable plan of operations, that gradually became manifest, was the Gars, for so the Chouans had dubbed the Marquis of Montauran since his arrival among them.

Hulot's despatches to his Government were found to be accurate on all heads. The authority of the newly arrived commander had been recognized at once. The Marquis had even sufficient ascendency over the Chouans to make them understand the real aim of the war, and to persuade them that the excesses of which they had formerly been guilty sullied the generous cause which they had embraced. The cool courage, splendid audacity, resource, and ability of the young noble were reviving the hopes of the foes of the Republic, and had excited the sombre enthusiasm of the West to such a pitch that even the most lukewarm were ready to take part in a bold stroke for the fallen Monarchy. Hulot's repeated reports and appeals received no reply from Paris;

some fresh revolutionary crisis, no doubt, caused the astonishing silence.

"Are appeals to the Government going to be treated like a creditor's duns?" said the old chief to his friends. "Are all our petitions shoved out of sight?"

But before long news began to spread of the magical return of General Bonaparte, and the events of the eighteenth of Brumaire. Then the commanders in the West began to understand the silence of the ministers, while they grew impatient of the heavy responsibilities that weighed upon them, and eager to hear what steps the new Government meant to take. Great was the joy in the army when it became known that General Bonaparte had been nominated First Consul of the Republic, and for the first time they saw a man of their own at the head of affairs. France had made an idol of the young general, and trembled with hope. The capital, grown weary of gloom, gave itself up to festivities long discontinued. The first acts of the Consulate abated these hopes no whit, and gave Liberty no qualms. The First Consul issued a proclamation to the dwellers in the West. Bonaparte had, one might almost say, invented the appeals to the masses which produced such enormous effect in those days of miracles and patriotism. A prophetic voice it was which filled the world, for victory had never yet failed to follow any proclamation of his.

"Inhabitants!

"For the second time an unnatural war has been kindled in the departments of the West.

"The authors of these troubles are traitors in the pay of England, or marauders who hope to secure their own ends, and to enjoy immunity amid civil discords.

"To such men as these the Government owes neither consideration nor an explanation of its principles.

"But there are other citizens, dear to their country, who have been seduced by their artifices; to these citizens, enlightenment and a knowledge of the truth is due.

"Unjust laws have been promulgated and carried into

effect. The security of citizens and their right to liberty of conscience have been infringed by arbitrary measures; citizens have suffered everywhere from mistaken entries on the list of Emigrants, great principles of social order have been violated.

"The Consuls declare that, liberty of worship being guaranteed by the Constitution, the law of the 11th Prairial Year III., by which citizens are allowed the use of buildings erected for religious worship, shall now be carried into effect.

"The Government will pardon previous offences; it will extend mercy and absolute and complete indemnity to the repentant; but it will strike down any who shall dare, after this declaration, to resist the national sovereignty."

"Well," said Hulot, after a public reading of the Consular manifesto, "could anything be more paternal? But for all that, you will see that not a single Royalist brigand will change his opinion!"

The commandant was right. The proclamation only confirmed each one in his adherence to his own side. Reinforcements for Hulot and his colleagues arrived a few days later. They were notified by the new Minister of War that General Brune was about to assume command in the West; but in the meanwhile Hulot, as an officer known to be experienced, was intrusted with the departments of the Orne and Mayenne. Every Government department showed unheard-of energy. A circular from the Minister of War and the Minister-General of Police gave out that active efforts were to be made through the officers in command to stifle the insurrection *at its place of origin*. But by this time the Chouans and Vendeans, profiting by the inaction of the Republic, had aroused the whole country and made themselves masters of it. So a new Consular proclamation had to be issued.

This time the General spoke to his troops—

"Soldiers, all who now remain in the West are marauders or emigrants in the pay of England.

"The army numbers more than sixty thousand heroes;

let me learn soon that the rebel leaders exist no longer. Glory is only to be had at the price of fatigue; who would not acquire it if it were to be gained by stopping in town quarters?

"Soldiers, no matter what your rank in the army, the gratitude of the nation awaits you. To be worthy of that gratitude you must brave the inclemency of the seasons, frost and snow, and the bitter cold of winter nights; you must surprise your enemies at daybreak and destroy those wretches who disgrace the name of Frenchmen.

"Let the campaign be short and sharp; show no mercy to the marauders, and preserve strict discipline among yourselves.

"National Guards, add your efforts to those of the troops of the line.

"If you know of any partisans of the bandits among yourselves, arrest them! Let them nowhere find a refuge from the soldier who pursues them; and should traitors dare to receive and protect them, let both alike perish!"

"What a fellow!" cried Hulot; "it is just as it used to be in Italy; first he rings the bells for mass, and then he goes and says it. Isn't that plain speaking?"

"Yes, but he speaks for himself and in his own name," said Gérard, who began to feel some concern for the results of the eighteenth of Brumaire.

"Eh! *Sainte gûerite*, what does it matter! Isn't he a soldier?" cried Merle.

A few paces away some soldiers had made a group about the placard on the wall. As no one among them could read, they eyed it, some with curiosity, others with indifference, while one or two looked out for some passing citizen who should appear scholar enough to decipher it.

"What does that scrap of paper mean, now, Clef-des-Cœurs?" asked Beau-Pied banteringly.

"It is quite easy to guess," said Clef-des-Cœurs. Everybody looked up at these words for the usual comedy to begin between the two comrades.

"Now look here," went on Clef-des-Cœurs, pointing to a rough vignette at the head of the proclamation, where a pair of compasses had in the past few days replaced the plumb-line level of 1793. "That means that we soldiers will have to step out. That's why the compasses are open; it's an emblem."

"No, my boy, you can't come the scholar over us. That thing is called a problem. I served once in the artillery," he added, "and that was what my officers fairly lived on."

"It's an emblem."

"A problem."

"Let us lay a bet on it."

"What?"

"Will you stake your German pipe?"

"Done!"

"No offence to you, sir!" said Clef-des-Cœurs to Gérard; "but isn't that an emblem and not a problem?"

"It is both the one and the other," said Gérard gravely. He was musing as he prepared to follow Hulot and Merle.

"The adjutant is laughing at us," said Beau-Pied; "that paper says that our general in Italy has been made Consul, which is a fine promotion, and we are all to have new caps and shoes."

II

A NOTION OF FOUCHÉ'S

ONE MORNING toward the end of the month of Brumaire, after an order from the Government had concentrated Hulot's troops upon Mayenne, that officer was engaged in drilling his demi-brigade. An express from Alençon arrived with despatches, which he read, while intense annoyance expressed itself in his face.

"Come, forward!" he cried peevishly, stuffing the papers into his hat. "Two companies are to set out with me to march upon Mortagne. The Chouans are there. You shall

accompany me," he said, turning to Merle and Gérard. "May I be ennobled if I understand a word of this. I may be a fool, but no matter, forward! There is no time to lose."

"What sort of fearful fowl could come out of that game bag?" asked Merle, kicking the fallen envelope.

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!* They are making fools of us, that is all."

Whenever this expression, explained above, escaped the commandant, it always meant a storm of some sort. The modulations of his voice when he uttered this phrase indicated to the demi-brigade, like the degrees of a thermometer, the amount of patience left in their chief; and the outspoken old soldier made this knowledge so easy that the most mischievous drummer could take his measure, by remarking his shades of manner in puckering up his cheek and winking. This time the suppressed anger with which he brought out the word silenced his friends and made them circumspect. The pock-marks on his martial countenance seemed deeper and darker than usual. As he put on his three-cornered hat, his large plaited queue had slipped round upon one shoulder. Hulot pushed it back so violently that the little curls were unsettled. However, as he remained motionless, with his arms locked across his chest and his mustache a-bristle with rage, Gérard ventured to ask—"Must we set out at once?"

"Yes, if the cartridge-boxes are filled," he growled out.

"They are all full."

"Shoulder arms! left file! forward, march!" ordered Gérard, at a sign from Hulot.

The drums headed the two companies chosen by Gérard. The commandant, plunged in his own thoughts, seemed to rouse himself at the sound, and went out of the town between his two friends without a word to either. Now and again Merle and Gérard looked at each other as if to say, "How long is he going to be sulky with us?" and as they went they furtively glanced at Hulot, who muttered chance words between his teeth.

Something very like an oath at times reached the soldiers'

ears, but neither dared to say a word, for on occasion all could preserve the severe discipline to which Bonaparte had accustomed his troops in Italy. Hulot and most of his men represented all that was left of the famous battalions who surrendered at Mayence, on condition that they should not be employed upon the frontiers; and the army had nicknamed them the *Mayençais*. It would have been difficult to find officers and men who understood each other better.

The earliest hours of the next morning found Hulot and his friends a league beyond Alençon on the Mortagne side, on a road through the meadows beside the Sarthe. On the left lie stretches of picturesque lowland; while on the right the dark woods, part of the great forest of Menil-Broust, form a *set-off*, to borrow a word from the studio, to the lovely views of the river. The clearings of the ditches on either hand, which are constantly thrown up in a mound on their further sides, form high banks, on the top of which furze bushes grow, *ajoncs*, as they call them in the West. These dense bushes furnished excellent winter fodder for horses and cattle, but so long as they remained uncut the dark-green clumps served as hiding-places for Chouans. These banks and furze bushes, signs which tell the traveller that he is nearing Brittany, made this part of the journey in those days as dangerous as it was beautiful.

The dangers involved by a journey from Mortagne to Alençon, and from Alençon to Mayenne, had caused Hulot's departure, and now the secret of his anger finally escaped him. He was escorting an old mail-coach drawn by post-horses, which the weariness of the soldiers compelled to move at a foot pace. The companies of Blues, belonging to the garrison of Mortagne, were visible as black dots in the distance on their way back thither; they had accompanied this shocking conveyance within their prescribed limits, and here Hulot must succeed them in the service, a "patriotic bore," as the soldiers not unjustly called it. One of the old Republican's companies took up its position a little in front, and the other a little behind the calèche; and Hulot, who

found himself between Merle and Gérard, at an equal distance from the vehicle and the vanguard, suddenly said—"*Mille Tonnerres!* would you believe that the general has drafted us out of Mayenne to escort a couple of petticoats in this old *fourgon?*"

"But not so long since, commandant," said Gérard, "when we took up our position, you made your bow to the citoyennes with a good enough grace."

"Ah! that is the worst of it! Don't these dandies in Paris require us to pay the greatest attention to their damned females? How can they bring dishonor on good and brave patriots like us, by setting us to dangle after a petticoat! I run straight myself, and I don't like crooked ways in others. When I saw that Danton and Barras had mistresses, I used to say, 'Citizens, when the Republic called on you to govern, it was not that you might play the same games as the old *régime.*' You will say now that women?—Oh, one must have women, that is right enough. Brave men must have women, look you, and good women too. But when things grow serious, prattling ought to stop. Why did we sweep the old abuses away if patriots are to begin them again? Look at the First Consul now, that is a man for you; no women, always at work. I would wager my left mustache he knows nothing of this foolish business."

"Really, commandant," laughed Merle, "I have seen the tip of the nose of the young lady there hidden on the back seat, and I am sure that no one need be blamed for feeling, as I do, a sort of hankering to take a turn round the coach and have a scrap of conversation with the ladies."

"Look out, Merle!" said Gérard; "there's a citizen along with the pretty birds quite sharp enough to catch you."

"Who? The *incroyable*, whose little eyes keep dodging about from one side of the road to the other, as if he saw Chouans everywhere? That dandy, whose legs you can scarcely see, and whose head, as soon as his horses' legs are hidden behind the carriage, sticks up like a duck's from a

pie? If that nincompoop hinders me from stroking the pretty white throat—"

"Duck and white throat! My poor Merle, thy fancy has taken wings with a vengeance! Don't be too sure of the duck. His green eyes are as treacherous as a viper's, and as shrewd as a woman's when she pardons her husband. I would sooner trust a Chouan than one of these lawyers with a face like a decanter of lemonade."

"Bah!" cried Merle gayly. "With the commandant's leave I shall risk it. That girl has eyes that shine like stars; one might run all hazards for a sight of them."

"He is smitten!" said Gérard to the commandant; "he is raving already."

Hulot made his grimace, shrugged his shoulder, and said —"I advise him to smell his soup before he takes it."

"Honest Merle, what spirits he has!" said Gérard, judging by the slackening of the other's pace that he meant to allow the coach to overtake him. "He is the only man that can laugh when a comrade dies without being thought heartless."

"He is a French soldier every inch of him," said Hulot gravely.

"Only look at him, pulling his epaulets over his shoulders, to show that he is a captain," cried Gérard, laughing; "as if his rank would do anything for him there."

There were, in fact, two women in the vehicle toward which the officer turned; one seemed to be the mistress, the other her maid.

"That sort of woman always goes about in pairs," said Hulot.

A thin, dried-up little man hovered sometimes before, sometimes behind the carriage; but though he seemed to accompany the two privileged travellers, no one had yet seen either of them speak a word to him. This silence, whether respectful or contemptuous, the numerous trunks and boxes belonging to the *princess*, as he called her, everything, down to the costume of her attendant cavalier, helped to stir Hulot's bile.

The stranger's dress was an exact picture of the fashions of the time—of the *Incroyable* at an almost burlesque pitch. Imagine a man muffled up in a coat with front so short that five or six inches of waistcoat were left on view, and coat-tails so long behind that they resembled the tail of the cod-fish, after which they were named. A vast cravat wound round his throat in such numerous folds that his little head, issuing from the labyrinth of muslin, almost justified Captain Merle's gastronomical simile. The stranger wore tight-fitting breeches and boots *à la Suwarrow*. A huge blue and white cameo served as a shirt-pin, a gold watch chain hung in two parallel lines from his waist. His hair hung on either side of his face in corkscrew ringlets, which almost covered his forehead; while, by way of final adornment, his shirt collar, like the collar of his coat, rose to such a height, that his head seemed surrounded by it, like a bouquet in its cornet of paper. Over and above the contrast of these insignificant details, all at odds among themselves and out of harmony, imagine a ludicrous strife of colors, yellow breeches, red waistcoat, and cinnamon-brown coat, and you will form a correct notion of the last decrees of elegance, as obeyed by dandies in the early days of the Consulate. This extravagantly absurd toilet might have been devised as an ordeal for comeliness, or to demonstrate that there is nothing so ridiculous but that fashion can hallow it. The cavalier seemed to be about thirty years of age, though in reality he was barely two-and-twenty. Hard living, or the perils of the times, had perhaps brought this about. In spite of his fantastic costume, there was a certain grace of manner revealed in his movements, which singled him out as a well-bred man.

As the captain reached the coach, the young exquisite seemed to guess his intentions, and assisted them by checking his own horse. Merle's satirical eyes fell upon an impenetrable face, trained, like many another, by the vicissitudes of the Revolution, to hide all feeling, even of the slightest. The moment that the curved edge of a shabby

cocked hat and a captain's epaulets came within the ladies' ken, a voice of angelic sweetness asked him—"Would you kindly tell us where we are now, *Monsieur l' Officier?*"

There is an indescribable charm in such a question by the way, a whole adventure seems to lurk behind a single word; and furthermore, if the lady, by reason of weakness or lack of experience, asks for some protecting aid, does not every man feel an inward prompting to weave fancies of an impossible happiness for himself? So the polite formality of her question, and her "*Monsieur l' Officier*," vaguely perturbed the captain's heart. He tried to distinguish the lady's face, and was singularly disappointed; a jealous veil hid her features, he could scarcely see her eyes gleaming behind the gauze, like two agates lighted up by the sun.

"You are now within a league of Alençon, madame."

"Alençon, already!" and the stranger lady fell back in the carriage without making any further reply.

"Alençon?" repeated the other woman, who seemed to rouse herself. "You are going to revisit—"

She looked at the captain and checked herself. Then Merle, disappointed in his hope of a sight of the fair stranger, took a look at her companion. She was a young woman of some twenty-six years of age, fair-haired, well-shaped, with the freshness of complexion and unfading brightness of color which distinguishes the women of Valognes, Bayeux, and the Alençon district. Sprightliness there was not in the expression of her blue eyes, but a certain steadfastness and tenderness. She wore a dress of some common material. Her way of wearing her hair, modestly gathered up and fastened under a little cap such as peasant women wear in the Pays-de-Caux, made her face charming in its simplicity. There was none of the conventional grace of the salons in her manner, but she was not without the dignity natural to a young girl who could contemplate the scenes of her past life without finding any matter for repentance in them.

At a glance, Merle recognized in her one of those country

blossoms which have lost none of their pure coloring and rustic freshness, although they have been transplanted into the hothouses of Paris, where the withering glare of many rays of light has been brought to bear upon them. Her quiet looks and unaffected manner made it plain to Merle that she did not wish for an audience. Indeed, when he fell away, the two women began a conversation in tones so low that the murmur scarcely reached his ears.

"You set out in such haste," said the young countrywoman, "that you had barely time to dress. A pretty sight you are! If we are going any further than Alençon, you will really have to change your dress there. . . ."

"Oh, oh, Francine!" said the other.

"What do you say?"

"This is the third time that you have tried to learn where we are going and why."

"Have I said anything whatever to deserve this reproof?"

"Oh, I have noticed your little ways. Simple and straightforward as you used to be, you have learned a little strategy of my teaching. You begin to hold direct questions in abhorrence. Quite right, my child. Of all known methods of getting at a secret, that one is, in my opinion, the most futile."

"Very well," said Francine, "as one cannot hide anything from you, admit at least, Marie, that your doings would make a saint inquisitive. Yesterday morning you had nothing whatever, to-day you have gold in plenty. At Mortagne they assign the mail coach to you which has just been robbed and lost its driver; you are given an escort by the Government; and a man whom I regard as your evil genius is following you."

"Who, Corentin?" . . . asked her companion, throwing emphasis into the two words by separate intonations of her voice. There was a contempt in it that overflowed even into the gesture by which she indicated the horseman. "Listen, Francine," she went on, "do you remember Patriot, the

monkey that I taught to mimic Danton, and which amused us so much?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Were you afraid of him?"

"But he was chained up."

"And Corentin is muzzled, my child."

"We used to play with Patriot for hours together, I know," said Francine, "but he always played us some ugly trick at last."

And Francine flung herself suddenly back in the carriage, and taking her mistress's hands, stroked them caressingly, as she went on tenderly—"But you know what is in my thoughts, Marie, and yet you say nothing to me. After the sorrows which have given me so much pain (ah, how much pain!), how should twenty-four hours put you in such spirits, wild as the moods when you used to talk of taking your life? What has brought the change about? You owe me some account of yourself. You belong to me rather than to any other whatever, for you will never be better loved than by me. Tell me, mademoiselle!"

"Very well, Francine; do you not see all about us the cause of my high spirits? Look at those clumps of trees over there, yellow and sear, no one like another. Seen from a distance, might they not be a bit of old tapestry in some chateau? See these hedges behind which Chouans might be met with at any moment; as I look at those tufts of gorse I seem to see the barrels of muskets. I enjoy this succession of perils about us. Every time that there is a deeper shadow across the road, I think to hear the report of firearms, and my heart beats with an excitement I have never felt before. It is neither fear nor pleasure that moves me so; it is a better thing; it is the free play of all that stirs within me; it is life. How should I not be glad to have revived my own existence a little?"

"Ah! you are telling me nothing, hard heart! Holy Virgin, to whom will she confess if not to me?" said Francine, sadly raising her eyes to heaven.

"Francine," her companion answered gravely, "I cannot tell you about my enterprise. It is too horrible this time."

"But why do evil with your eyes open?"

"What would you have? I detect myself thinking like a woman of fifty and acting like a girl of fifteen. You have always been my better self, my poor girl, but this time I must stifle my conscience . . ." she paused as a sigh escaped her . . . "and I shall not succeed. But how can I keep such a strict confessor beside me?" and she softly tapped the other's hand.

"Ah! when have I reproached you with anything?" cried Francine. "Evil in you has so much grace with it. Yes, Saint Anne of Auray, to whom I pray so often for you, will absolve you. And for the rest, am I not come beside you now, though I do not know where your way is taking you?"

She kissed her mistress's hands with this outburst.

"But you can leave me," said Marie, "if your conscience—"

"Not another word, madame," said Francine with a little sorrowful twitch of the lips. "Oh, will you not tell me—"

"Nothing!" said the young lady firmly. "Only, be sure of this, that the enterprise is even more odious to me than the smooth-tongued creature who explained its nature. I wish to be candid; so to you I confess that I would not have lent myself to their wishes if I had not seen, in this ignoble farce, some gleams of mingled love and terror which attracted me. Then I would not leave this vile world without an effort to gather the flowers I look for from it, even if I must die for them! But, remember, for it is due to my memory, that had my life been happy, that great knife of theirs held above my head would never have forced me to take a part in this tragedy, for tragedy it is." A gesture of disgust escaped her; then she went on, "But now, if the piece were to be withdrawn, I should throw myself into the Sarthe, and that would be in no sense a suicide, for as yet I have not lived."

"Oh, holy Virgin of Auray, forgive her!"

"What are you afraid of? The dreary ups and downs of domestic life arouse no emotions in me, as you know. This is ill in a woman, but my soul has loftier capacities, in order to abide mightier trials. I should have been, perhaps, a gentle creature like you. Why am I so much above or below other women? Ah, how happy is the wife of General Bonaparte! But I shall die young, for even now I have come not to shrink from that kind of pleasure which means 'drinking blood,' as poor Danton used to say. Now forget all this that the woman of fifty within me says. The girl of fifteen will soon reappear, thank Heaven!"

The younger women shuddered. She alone understood the fiery and impetuous nature of her mistress; she only had been initiated into the mysteries of an inner life full of lofty imaginings, the ideas of a soul for whom life had hitherto seemed intangible as a shadow which she longed to grasp. There had been no harvest after all her sowings; her nature had never been touched; she was harassed by futile longings, wearied by a struggle without an opponent, so that in despair she had come to prefer good to evil if it came as an enjoyment, and evil to good if only an element of poetry lurked behind, to prefer wretchedness as something grander than a life of narrow comfort, and death, with its dark uncertainties, to an existence of starved hopes or insignificant sufferings. Never has so much powder awaited the spark, such wealth lain in store for love to consume, so much gold been mingled with the clay in a daughter of Eve. Over this nature Francine watched like an angel on earth, worshipping its perfection, feeling that she should fulfil her mission if she preserved, for the choir above, this seraph, kept afar as an expiation of the sin of pride.

"That is the steeple of Alençon," said their cavalier, as he drew near to the coach.

"So I see," said the lady dryly.

"Very well!" he said, and fell back again with all the tokens of abject submission, in spite of his disappointment.

"Quicker!" cried the lady to the postilion. "There is nothing to fear now! Go on at a trot or a gallop if you can. We are on the causeway of Alençon, are we not?"

As she passed him she called graciously to Hulot—"We shall meet each other at the inn, commandant. Come and see me."

"Just so," he replied; "'I am going to the inn, come and see me!' That is the way to speak to the commandant of a demi-brigade."

He jerked his fist in the direction of the vanishing coach.

"Don't grumble, commandant," said Corentin, laughing; "she has your general's commission in her sleeve," and he tried to put his horse to a gallop, to overtake the coach.

"Those good folk shall not make a fool of me," growled Hulot to his two friends. "I would sooner fling my general's uniform into a ditch than get it through a woman's favor. What do the geese mean? Do you understand their drift, either of you?"

"Quite well," said Merle; "I know that she is the handsomest woman I ever set eyes on! You don't understand figures of speech, I think. Perhaps it is the First Cnsul's wife."

"Stuff, his wife is not young, and this one is," answered Hulot. "Besides, the orders I have received from the minister inform me that she is Mlle. de Verneuil. She is a *ci-devant*. Don't I know that! They used to carry on like this before the Revolution; you could be a chief of demi-brigade in a brace of shakes. You had only to say to them '*Mon cœur!*' once or twice, with the proper emphasis."

As each soldier "stepped out," to use their commandant's phrase, the wretched vehicle which then served for a mail coach had quickly reached the sign of the Three Moors in the middle of the principal street of Alençon. The rattle of the crazy conveyance brought the landlord to the threshold. Nobody in Alençon had expected that chance would bring the coach to the sign of the Three Moors; but the horrible event at Mortagne brought out so many people to look at

it, that its occupants, to escape the general curiosity, fled into the kitchen, the antechamber of every inn throughout the West. The host was preparing to follow them after a look at the coach, when the postilion caught his arm.

"Look here, citizen Brutus," he said; "there is an escort of Blues on the way. As there was neither driver nor despatches, it was my doing that the citoyennes came to you. Of course, they will pay like *ci-devant* princesses; and so—"

"And so we will have a glass of wine together directly, my boy," said the landlord.

Mlle. de Verneuil gave one glance round the smoke-blackened kitchen, and at the stains of raw meat on the table, and then fled like a bird into the next room. For the appearance and odor of the place dismayed her quite as much as the inquisitive looks which a slovenly cook and a short, stout woman fastened upon her.

"How are we going to manage, wife?" said the landlord. "Who the devil would think so many people would come here as times go now? She will never have the patience to wait till I can serve her up a suitable meal. My word, I have hit upon it; they belong to the quality, why shouldn't they breakfast with the lady upstairs, eh?"

When the host looked about for the new-comers, he found only Francine, whom he drew to the side of the kitchen nearest the yard, so that no one could overhear him, and said—"If the ladies wish to breakfast by themselves, as I expect they do, I have a very nice meal now ready for a lady and her son. They would not object, of course, to breakfasting with you," he went on mysteriously. "They are people of quality."

The words were hardly out before the landlord felt a light blow on the back from a whip-handle; he turned quickly and saw behind him a short, thick-set man, who had come in noiselessly from a closet adjoining. The stout woman, the cook, and his assistant seemed frozen with terror by this apparition. The landlord turned his head away aghast. The short man shook aside the hair which covered his eyes

and forehead and stood on tiptoe to whisper in the landlord's ear—"You know what any blabbing or imprudence lays you open to, and the color of the money we pay in. We never grudge it—" A gesture rendered his meaning horribly clear.

The stout person of the landlord hid the speaker, but Francine caught a word here and there of his muttered talk, and stood as if thunderstruck as she listened to the hoarse sounds of a Breton voice. Amid the general dismay she sprang toward the speaker, but he had darted through a side door into the yard with the quickness of a wild animal. Francine thought that she must be mistaken, for she could only see what appeared to be the brindled fell of a fair-sized bear.

She ran to the window in surprise, and gazed after the figure through the grimy panes. He was slouching off to the stable; but before he entered, he bent two piercing black eyes upon the first story of the inn, and then turned them on the coach, as if he wished to call the attention of some one within to some point of special interest about it.

Thanks to this manœuvre, which displayed his face, Francine recognized the Chouan as Marche-a-Terre, despite his goatskin cloak, by his heavy whip, and the lagging gait, which he could quicken upon occasion. She watched him still even through the dimness of the stable, where he lay down in a heap among the straw, in a spot whence he could see all that went on in the inn. Even at close quarters an experienced spy might have taken him for a big carter's dog curled round, asleep, with his muzzle between his paws. His conduct convinced Francine that he had not recognized her. In her mistress's difficult position, she hardly knew whether this was a relief or an annoyance. But her curiosity was whetted by the mysterious connection between the Chouan's threat and the landlord's proposal, for an innkeeper is always ready to stop two mouths with one morsel.

She left the dingy window, whence she had seen Marche-

a-Terre as a shapeless heap in the darkness, and turned to the landlord, who stood like a man who has made a false step and cannot see how to retrieve it. The Chouan's gesture had petrified the poor fellow. Every one in the West knew how the *Chasseurs du Roi* visited even a suspicion of indiscretion with cruel refinements of torture. The landlord seemed to feel their knives at his throat. The chef stared in terror at the hearth, where too often they "warmed the feet" of their victims. The stout woman ceased to pare a potato, and gaped stupidly at her husband, while the scullion tried to guess the meaning of this mute terror. Francine's curiosity was naturally roused by all this dumb-show, with the principal performer absent though still visible. The Chouan's terrible power pleased her; and although it hardly lay in her meek nature to play the abigail, for once she was too deeply interested not to use her opportunities for penetrating this mystery.

"Very good, mademoiselle accepts your offer," she said gravely. At her words the landlord started as if from sleep.

"What offer?" he asked in real surprise.

"What offer?" asked Corentin as he came in.

"What offer?" asked Mlle. de Verneuil.

"What offer?" asked a fourth person from the foot of the staircase, as he sprang into the kitchen.

"Why, to breakfast with your people of distinction," answered Francine impatiently.

"People of distinction," said the arrival from the staircase, in caustic and mocking tones; "this is one of your landlord's jokes, and a very poor one; but if it is this young citoyenne whom you wish to add to our party," he added, looking at Mlle. de Verneuil, "it would be folly to decline, my good fellow. In my mother's absence I accept," and he clapped the bewildered landlord on the shoulder.

The careless grace of youth concealed the insolent pride of his words, which naturally drew the attention of those

present to the new actor in the scene. The host put on the face of Pilate at this, washing his hands of the death of Christ; he stepped back and whispered to his plump wife —"You are my witness that, if anything goes wrong, I am not to blame. But, at all events," he added in still lower tones, "let M. Marche-a-Terre know everything."

The new-comer was of middle height, and wore the uniform of the "Ecole polytechnique," a blue coat without epaulets, breeches of the same material, and black gaiters that reached above the knee. In spite of this sombre costume, Mademoiselle de Verneuil recognized at a glance the grace of his figure and an indescribable something which indicated noble birth. At first sight there was nothing remarkable in his face, but something in his features soon made it felt that he was capable of great things. A sunburned face, fair and curling hair, brilliant blue eyes, and a delicately cut nose, all these traits, like the ease of his movements, revealed a life subordinated to lofty sentiments and a mind accustomed to command. The feature that most clearly revealed his character was a chin like Bonaparte's, or a mouth where the lower lip met the upper in a curve like that of some acanthus leaf on a Corinthian capital; there Nature had exerted all her powers of magic.

"This young man is no ordinary Republican," said Mlle. de Verneuil to herself.

She understood everything in a moment, and the wish to please awoke in her. She bent her head a little to one side with a coquettish smile, and the dark eyes shot forth one of those velvet glances that would awaken life in a heart dead to love; then the heavy eyelids fell over her black eyes, and their thick lashes made a curved line of shadow on her cheeks as she said, "We are very much obliged to you, sir," imparting a thrill to the conventional phrase by the most musical tones her voice could give. All this by-play took place in less time than it takes to describe it, and at once Mlle. de Verneuil turned to the landlord, asked for her room, found the staircase, and disappeared with Fran-

cine, leaving the stranger to decide whether or no she had accepted his invitation.

"Who is the woman?" asked the pupil of the Ecole polytechnique of the still further embarrassed and motionless landlord.

"She is the citoyenne Verneuil," answered Corentin tartly, as he ran his eyes over the other jealously. "What makes you ask?"

The stranger hummed a Republican air, and raised his head haughtily at Corentin. The two young men looked at one another for a moment like game-cocks about to fight, and at a glance an undying hatred of each other dawned in them both. For the frank gaze of the soldier's blue eyes there shone malice and deceit in Corentin's green orbs. The one naturally possessed a gracious manner, the other could only substitute insinuating dexterity of address; the first would have rushed forward where the other slunk back. The one commanded the respect that the other sought to obtain; the first seemed to say, "Let us conquer!" the second, "Let us divide the spoil!"

"Is the citizen du Gua St.-Cyr here?" asked a peasant at the door.

"What do you want with him?" asked the young man, coming forward.

The peasant made a deep reverence and handed him a letter, which the young man read and threw into the fire. He nodded by way of answer, and the peasant went away.

"You have come from Paris, no doubt, citizen!" said Corentin, coming up to him with a familiar and cringing complaisance that the citizen du Gua could hardly endure.

"Yes," he replied dryly.

"Some appointment in the artillery, I expect."

"No, citizen, in the navy."

"Ah! then you are going to Brest," said Corentin carelessly, but the young sailor turned away quickly on his heel without replying.

He soon disappointed the fair expectations that Mlle. de

Verneuil had formed of him. A puerile interest in his breakfast absorbed him. He discussed recipes with the chef and the landlady, opened his eyes at provincial ways like a fledgling Parisian picked out of his enchanted shell, affected repugnances, and altogether showed a weakness of mind that one would not have expected from his appearance. Corentin smiled pityingly as he turned up his nose at the best cider in Normandy.

"Faugh!" he cried, "how do you manage to swallow that stuff? One could eat and drink it too. No wonder the Republic suspects a district where they bang the trees with long poles for their vintage, and lie in wait to shoot travellers on the roads. Don't put that physic on the table for us, but give us some good Bordeaux wine, both white and red, and see, above all things, that there is a good fire upstairs. Civilization is a long way behind hereabout, it seems to me. Ah!" he sighed, "there is but one Paris in the world, and it is a pity indeed that one cannot take it afloat with one. Hullo, spoil-sauce," he cried to the cook, "do you mean to say you are putting vinegar into the fricassee when there are lemons at hand? And your sheets, madame landlady, were so coarse that I scarcely slept a wink all night."

He then betook himself to playing with a large cane, performing with childish gravity a number of evolutions, which decided the place of a youth among Incroyables by the degree of skill and neatness with which they were executed.

"And out of whipper-snappers like that the Republic hopes to construct a navy," said Corentin confidentially, as he scanned the landlord's face.

"That man is one of Fouché's spies," whispered the sailor to the landlady. "I see it in every line of his face. I would swear that he brought that splash of mud on his chin from Paris. But set a thief to catch—"

A lady entered the kitchen as he spoke, whom he greeted with every outward sign of respect.

"Come here, *chère maman*," he cried; "I think I have found some one to share our meal."

"To share our meal! What nonsense!" she replied.

"It is Mlle. de Verneuil," he said, lowering his voice.

"She perished on the scaffold after the Savenay affair; she had come to Mans to save her brother, the Prince de Loudon," said his mother shortly.

"You are mistaken, madame," said Corentin amiably, and with a little pause on the word *madame*. "There is a second Mademoiselle de Verneuil. Great families have always several branches."

Surprised at his freedom, the lady drew back a pace or two, as if to scrutinize this unlooked-for speaker. She bent her dark eyes upon him as if she would divine, with a woman's keen power of apprehension, why he affirmed Mlle. de Verneuil to be yet in existence. Corentin, who at the same time furtively studied the lady, refused her the pleasures of maternity to endow her with those of love.

He gallantly declined to believe her to be the happy mother of a son twenty years of age, seeing her dazzling complexion, her thick arching eyebrows, her still abundant eyelashes, which excited his admiration, and her wealth of black tresses, divided on the forehead into two bandeaux, a style which enhanced the youthfulness of a sprightly face. It was the force of passion, he thought, and by no means time, that had set faint lines on her forehead; and if the piercing eyes drooped somewhat, this might be due rather to the constant expression of lively feelings than to the weariness of her pilgrimage. Corentin then discovered that the cloak she wore was of English materials, and that her bonnet followed some foreign fashion, and was not in the mode, called a *à la Grecque*, which ruled Parisian toilets.

Corentin's nature always led him to suspect evil rather than good, and he began at once to have his doubts as to the patriotism of the pair; while the lady, who had as rapidly come to her own conclusions about Corentin, looked at her son, as if to say, "Who is this quiz? Is he on our

side?" To this implied question, the young man's manner replied, like his look and gesture, "I know nothing about him, upon my word, and you cannot suspect him as much as I do." Then, leaving it to his mother to discover the mystery, he went up and whispered to the hostess—"Try to find out who the rogue is, and whether he really does accompany that young lady, and why."

"So you are sure, citizen," said Mme. du Gua, looking at Corentin, "that Mlle. de Verneuil is still living?"

"She exists as surely in flesh and blood, madame, as the citizen du Gua Saint-Cyr."

There was a profound irony beneath his words known only to the lady herself; any other woman would have been disconcerted. Her son suddenly fixed his eyes on Corentin, who coolly drew out his watch, and did not seem to suspect the apprehensions his reply had aroused. But the lady, uneasy and anxious to know at once whether treachery lurked in the words, or chance had directed them, said to Corentin quite simply—"*Mon Dieu!* How unsafe the roads are! The Chouans set upon us on the other side of Mortagne. My son narrowly escaped being left there for good; he had two balls through his hat while defending me."

"Then, madame, you were in the coach that was plundered by the brigands, in spite of its escort, and which has just brought us hither. You will recognize it, I expect. They said as I came through Mortagne that Chouans to the number of two thousand had attacked the mail, and that every one, even the travellers, had perished. That is how history is written."

The fatuous air with which Corentin spoke, and his drawling tones, recalled some *habitué* of "La Petite Provence," who has discovered to his sorrow that a piece of political news is false.

"Alas, madame," he went on, "if travellers are murdered at such a short distance from Paris, what will be the state of affairs in Brittany! Faith, I shall go back to Paris and not venture any further."

"Is Mademoiselle de Verneuil young and beautiful?" asked the lady of their hostess, as a sudden thought crossed her mind.

Just then the landlord ended the conversation, which had so painful an interest for the three speakers, by the announcement that breakfast was ready. The young sailor offered his arm to his mother with an assumed familiarity which confirmed Corentin's doubts.

He called out as he reached the staircase—"Citizen, if you are travelling with the citoyenne Verneuil, and she accepts our landlord's offer, do not hesitate." And though these words were careless, and his manner by no means pressing, Corentin went upstairs. As soon as they were some seven or eight steps ahead of the Parisian, the young man pressed the lady's hand affectionately, and said in a low voice —"See now the inglorious hazards to which your plans have exposed us. If we are detected, how are we to escape? And what a part you have made me play!"

The three entered a large-sized room. Even those unaccustomed to travel in the West would have seen that the landlord had expended all his resources in a lavish preparation for his guests. The table was carefully appointed, the dampness of the room had been driven off by a large fire, the earthenware, linen, and furniture were not intolerably dirty. Corentin saw that the landlord had put himself about a good deal, as the popular saying is, to please the strangers.

"So," he thought, "these people are not what they wish to appear then. The little youngster is adroit. I took him for a simpleton, but I fancy he is quite as sharp as I am myself."

The landlord went to inform Mlle. de Verneuil that the young sailor, his mother, and Corentin awaited her coming.

As she did not appear, the student of the Ecole polytechnique felt sure that she had raised difficulties, and humming "Veillons au salut de l'Empire," he went off in the direction of her room. A curiously keen desire possessed him to overcome her scruples and bring her back with him. Perhaps he

meant to solve the doubts which disturbed him, or to try to exert over this stranger the authority men like to exercise in the case of a pretty woman.

"May I be hanged if that is a Republican," thought Corentin, as he went out. "The movements of those shoulders show the courtier. . . . And if that is his mother," he continued, as he looked again at Mme. de Gua, "I am the Pope! I believe they are Chouans; let us make certain of their condition."

The door soon opened, and the young sailor appeared, leading by the hand Mlle. de Verneuil, whom he led to her place with presumptuous civility. The devil had lost nothing during the hour which had just passed. With Francine's aid, Mlle. de Verneuil had equipped herself in a travelling dress more formidable perhaps than a ball toilet; for a woman beautiful enough to discard ornaments knows how to relegate the charms of her toilet to a second place, and to avail herself of the attractions of a simplicity that proceeds from art. She wore a green dress, charmingly made, and a short jacket or spencer fastened with loops of twisted braid, a costume which fitted the outlines of her form with a subtlety scarcely girlish, and displayed her slender figure and graceful movements. She came in smiling, with the amiability natural to a woman who can disclose a set of even teeth, white as porcelain, between two red lips, and a couple of fresh childish dimples in her cheeks. She had discarded the bonnet, which at first had almost hidden her face from the young sailor, and could employ the numerous apparently unconscious little devices by which a woman displays or enhances the charms of her face and the graces of her head. A certain harmony between her manners and her toilet made her seem so youthful that Madame du Gua thought herself liberal in allowing her some twenty years of age.

The coquetry of this change of costume, which showed a deliberate effort to please, might have aroused hope in the young man, but Mlle. de Verneuil bowed slightly without looking at him, and left him to himself with a careless cheer-

fulness that disconcerted him. Her reserve seemed to unaccustomed eyes to indicate neither coquetry nor prudence, but simple indifference, real or affected. The ingenuous expression which she knew how to assume was inscrutable. There was not a trace in her manner of the anticipation of a conquest; the pretty ways which had already flattered and deceived the young man's self-love seemed native to her. So the stranger took his place somewhat put out.

Mlle. de Verneuil took Francine's hand and addressed Mme. du Gua in conciliatory tones—"Madame, will you be so good as to allow this girl to breakfast with us? She is rather a friend than a servant, and in these stormy times devotion can only be repaid by friendship; indeed, what else is there left to us?" To this last observation, made in a lowered voice, Mme. du Gua replied by a somewhat stiff and mutilated courtesy that revealed her annoyance at coming in contact with so pretty a woman. She stooped to whisper in her son's ear—"Oh! 'stormy times,' 'devotion,' 'madame,' and the waiting-woman; this is not Mlle. de Verneuil, but some creature sent by Fouché."

Mlle. de Verneuil became aware of Corentin's presence as they seated themselves; he still submitted the strangers to a narrow inspection, under which they seemed rather uneasy.

"Citizen," she said, "I am sure you are too well bred to wish to follow me about in this way. The Republic sent my relations to the scaffold, but had not the magnanimity to find a guardian for me. So, though, against my wish, you have accompanied me so far with a Quixotic courtesy quite unheard of," and she sighed, "I am determined not to permit the protecting care you have expended upon me to become a source of annoyance to you. I am in safety here, and you can leave me."

She looked at him resolutely and scornfully. Corentin understood her, suppressed a lurking smile about the corners of his crafty mouth, and bowed respectfully.

"Citoyenne," said he, "it is always an honor to obey

your commands. Beauty is the only queen whom a true Republican can willingly serve."

Mlle. de Verneuil smiled so significantly and joyously at Francine as he went that Madame du Gua's suspicions were somewhat allayed, albeit prudence had come along with jealousy of Mlle. de Verneuil's perfect loveliness.

"Perhaps she is Mlle. de Verneuil after all," she said to her son.

"How about the escort?" he answered, for vexation had made him discreet in his turn. "Is he her jailer or her protector? Is she a friend or an enemy of the Government?"

Madame du Gua's eyes seemed to say that she meant to go to the bottom of this mystery. Corentin's departure appeared to reassure the young sailor, his face relaxed, but the way in which he looked at Mlle. de Verneuil revealed rather an immoderate love of women in general than the dawning warmth of a respectful passion. On the other hand, the young lady grew more and more reserved, keeping all her friendly words for Madame du Gua, until the young man grew sulky at being left to himself, and in his vexation assumed airs of indifference. It was all lost, it seemed, upon Mlle. de Verneuil, who appeared to be unaffected, but not shy, and reserved without prudishness. After all, this casual meeting of people who were unlikely to know more of each other called for no special emotion; but a certain constraint, and even a vulgar embarrassment, began to spoil any pleasure which Mlle. de Verneuil and the young sailor had expected from it but a moment before. But women have among themselves such strong interests in common, or such a keen desire for emotions, combined with so wonderful an instinct for finding the right thing to say and do, that they can always break the ice on such occasions. So that, as if one thought possessed both ladies, they began to rally their cavalier, rivalled each other in paying him various small attentions, and joked at his expense. This unanimity of plan set them free from constraint. Words and looks began

to lose their significance and importance. At the end of half an hour, in fact, the two women, already enemies at heart, were outwardly on the best of terms, while the young sailor found that he preferred Mademoiselle de Verneuil's reserve to her present vivacity. He was so tormented that he angrily wished he had not asked her to join them.

"Madame," said Mademoiselle de Verneuil at last, "is your son always as dull as this?"

"Mademoiselle," broke in the victim, "I was just asking myself what is the good of a pleasure that cannot last. The keenness of my enjoyment is the secret of my dulness."

"Pretty speeches like that are rather courtly for the Ecole polytechnique," she said, laughing.

"His idea was very natural, mademoiselle," said Madame du Gua, who for her own reasons wished to set her guest at ease.

"Come, why do you not laugh?" said the latter, smiling. "How do you look when you weep, if what you are pleased to call 'a pleasure' depresses you like this?"

Her smile, accompanied by a challenge from her eyes which broke through the mask of sedateness, gave some hope to the young sailor. But inspired by her nature, which always leads a woman to do too much or too little, the more Mlle. de Verneuil seemed to take possession of the young sailor by glances full of the foreshadowing of love, the more she opposed a cool and reserved severity to his gallant expressions—the common tactics which women use to conceal their sentiments. For one moment, and one only, when each had thought to find the other's eyelids lowered, a glance communicated their real thoughts; but they both lowered their eyes as promptly as they had raised them, confounded by the sudden flash that had agitated both their hearts while it enlightened them. In embarrassment at having said so much in a glance, they did not dare to look at each other again. Mlle. de Verneuil, anxious to undeceive the stranger, took refuge in a cool politeness, and even seemed to be impatient for their breakfast to be over.

"You must have suffered much in prison, mademoiselle?" queried Mme. du Gua.

"Alas! madame, I feel as though I had not yet ceased to be a prisoner."

"Is your escort intended to watch you or to watch over you, mademoiselle? Are you suspected by the Republic, or are you dear to it?"

Mlle. de Verneuil felt instinctively that Mme. du Gua took but little interest in her, and the question startled her.

"Madame," she replied, "I hardly know what my precise relations with the Republic are at this moment."

"You make it tremble perhaps," said the young man, somewhat ironically.

"Why do you not respect mademoiselle's secrets?" asked Mme. du Gua.

"The secrets of a young girl who has known nothing of life as yet but its sorrows are not very interesting, madame."

"But the First Consul seems to be exceedingly well disposed," said Mme. du Gua, wishful to keep up a conversation which might tell her something that she wanted to know. "Do they not say that he is about to repeal the law against emigrants?"

"It is quite true, madame," said the other, almost too eagerly perhaps. "Why, then, should we arouse La Vendée and Brittany? Why kindle the flames of insurrection in France?"

This generous outburst, in which she seemed to put a note of self-reproach, moved the young sailor. He looked attentively at Mlle. de Verneuil, but he could read neither hatred nor love in her face. Her face, with its delicate tints that attested the fineness of the skin, was impenetrable. Ungovernable curiosity suddenly attracted him toward this singular being, to whom he had already felt drawn by strong desire.

"But you are going to Mayenne, madame?" she asked after a short pause.

"And if so, mademoiselle?" queried the young man.

"Well, if so, madame, and as your son is in the service of the Republic—"

These words were uttered with seeming carelessness, but she gave a furtive glance at the two strangers, such as only women and diplomatists employ, as she continued, "You must be in fear of the Chouans? An escort is not to be despised. We are almost travelling companions already. Will you come with us to Mayenne?"

Mother and son looked at each other, and the latter spoke.

"I hardly know, Mademoiselle, whether I do very discreetly in telling you that matters of great importance require us to be in the district of Fougères to-night, and that so far we have found nô means of transport; but women are so generous by nature that I should be ashamed not to trust you. But still," he continued, "before we put ourselves in your hands, let us know at any rate if we are likely to issue from them safe and sound. Are you the slave or the mistress of your Republican escort? Forgive the plain speaking of a young sailor, but I see so much that is unusual in your circumstances—"

"In these times, sir, nothing that happens is usual. Believe me, you may accept without hesitation. Above all," she spoke with emphasis, "you have no treachery to fear in a straightforward offer made by one who takes no share in party hatreds."

"Even then the journey will have its perils," he answered, with an arch look that gave significance to the commonplace words.

"What are you afraid of now?" she asked, with a mocking smile; "there is no danger that I see, for anybody."

"Is this the woman whose glances reflected my desires," said he to himself. "What a tone to take! Does she mean to entrap me?"

The shrill piercing cry of a screech-owl rang out like a dismal portent; it seemed to come from the chimney.

"What is that?" asked Mademoiselle de Verneuil, with

a gesture of surprise. "It is a bad omen for our journey. And how is it that screech-owls hoot in broad daylight hereabout?"

"They do at times," said the young man shortly. "Mademoiselle, perhaps we shall bring you ill luck. Is not that what you are thinking? We had better not travel together."

This was said with a soberness and gravity that astonished her.

"I have no wish to constrain you, sir," she said with aristocratic impertinence. "Pray let us keep what little liberty the Republic allows us. If your mother were alone, I should insist—"

The heavy footsteps of a soldier sounded from the corridor, and Hulot showed a scowling face.

"Come here, colonel," said Mlle. de Verneuil, smiling and pointing to a chair beside her. "Let us occupy ourselves with affairs of State if we must. But do not look so serious! What is the matter with you? Are there Chouans about?"

The commandant was staring open-mouthed at the stranger, at whom he gazed with close attention.

"Will you take some more hare, mother? Mademoiselle, you are eating nothing," the sailor said to Francine, and he busied himself with his companions.

But there was something so cruelly earnest in Hulot's surprise and Mlle. de Verneuil's attention that it was dangerous to disregard these facts.

"What is the matter, commandant? Do you happen to know me?" he asked sharply.

"Perhaps," answered the Republican.

"Indeed, I think I have seen you as a visitor at the school."

"I never went to school at all," the commandant answered abruptly. "What sort of school may you come from?"

"The École polytechnique."

"Oh! ah! yes! Those barracks where they train soldiers

in the dormitories," replied the commandant, who had an ungovernable dislike of all officers from this scientific seminary. "What corps are you serving in?"

"I am in the navy."

"Ah!" said Hulot, laughing spitefully, "do you know many pupils from that school in the navy? They only turn out officers of artillery and engineers," he went on sternly.

The other was not disconcerted.

"The name I bear has made an exception of me," he answered. "We have all been sailors in our family."

"Ah!" said Hulot; "and what is your family name, citizen?"

"Du Gua Saint-Cyr."

"Then you were not murdered at Mortagne?"

"Ah! A very little more and we must have been," said Madame du Gua; "my son had a couple of balls through—"

"Have you your papers?" said Hulot, who paid no attention to the mother.

"Would you like to read them?" said the young man flippantly, with malice in his blue eyes, as he looked from the scowling commandant to Mlle. de Verneuil.

"I am to have a young fool set his wits at me, I suppose," said Hulot. "Give me your papers, or come away with you."

"Come, come, my fine fellow, I am not a recruit. Why should I answer you? Who may you be?"

"I am the commandant of the department," answered Hulot.

"Oh, then this is a very serious matter, and I might be taken with arms in my hands." He held out a glass of Bordeaux wine to the commandant.

"I am not thirsty," said Hulot. "Come, show me your papers."

Just then the tramp of soldiers and the clanking of weapons filled the street. Hulot stepped to the window with a satisfaction that alarmed Mlle. de Verneuil. This sign of concern softened the young man, whose face had grown cold

and hard. He searched the pocket of his coat and drew out an elegant portfolio, and from this he selected papers which he handed to the commandant, and which Hulot began to read deliberately, studying the signature on the passport and the face of the suspected traveller. As he proceeded with his scrutiny, the screech-owl hooted again, but this time it was plainly in the accents of a human voice.

The commandant returned the papers with a sarcastic expression.

"This is all very fine," he said, "but you must follow me to the district headquarters. I am not fond of music."

"Why take him to the district?" asked Mlle. de Verneuil in a new tone of voice.

"That is no business of yours, young lady," said Hulot, with the usual grimace.

Irritated at this language from the old soldier, and by the way she had been lowered, as it were, in the eyes of a man who had taken a fancy to her, Mlle. de Verneuil dropped the sedate manner which had hitherto been hers, her color rose, and her eyes glowed.

"Tell me, has this young man satisfied the requirements of the law?" she asked gently, though her voice faltered a little.

"Yes, to outward seeming."

"Well, then, I shall expect you to leave him alone 'in outward seeming.' Are you afraid he will escape you? You are going to escort us to Mayenne; he and his mother will travel in the coach with me. No objections—it is my wish! Now, what is it?" she added when he made his usual little grimace. "Do you still suspect him?"

"To some extent."

"What do you want to do?"

"Nothing but to cool his head a bit with some lead. . . . A hare-brained boy!" said the commandant, sardonically.

"You are joking, Colonel."

"Come, comrade!" said the commandant, with a movement of the head; "come, let us be off, sharp!"

At this impertinence from Hulot, Mlle. de Verneuil smiled and grew calm.

"Stay where you are," she said to the young man, with a dignified gesture of protection.

"What a splendid head!" he whispered to his mother, who knitted her brows.

Repressed vexation and wounded susceptibilities had brought new beauties into the fair Parisian's face. Every one rose to their feet, Francine, and Mme. du Gua and her son. Mlle. de Verneuil quickly stepped between them and the commandant, who was smiling, and deftly unfastened the loops of braid on her spencer. Then with the heedlessness that possesses a woman whose self-love has been severely wounded, she drew out a letter and handed it at once to the commandant, pleased with her power, and as impatient to exercise it as any child can be to try a new plaything.

"Read it," she said with a sarcastic smile.

Intoxicated with her triumph, she returned toward the young man, with a glance at him in which malice and love were mingled. The brows of both grew lighter, a flush of joy overspread their excited faces innumerable, contending thoughts arose in their minds. Mme. du Gua's glance seemed to say that she attributed Mlle. de Verneuil's generosity rather to love than to charity, and she was certainly quite right. The fair traveller flushed up in the first instance, and modestly lowered her eyelids, as she gathered the meaning of that feminine glance; but she raised her head again proudly under the menacing accusation, and defiantly met all eyes. Meanwhile, the petrified commandant handed back her letter, countersigned by ministers, and enjoining all persons in authority to obey the orders of the mysterious bearer; but he drew his sword from its sheath broke it over his knee, and flung down the fragments.

"Mademoiselle, you probably know what you are about; but a Republican has his own ideas and a pride of his own, and I have not yet learned to take my orders from a pretty woman. The First Consul will receive my resignation to-

night, and another than Hulot will obey you. When I do not understand a matter, I will not stir in it, especially if I am supposed to understand it and cannot."

There was a moment's silence, soon broken by the young Parisian lady, who went up to the commandant, held out her hand, and said—"Colonel, although your beard is rather long, you may give me a kiss. You are a man!"

"So I trust, mademoiselle," he answered, as he awkwardly pressed his lips to the hand of this strange girl. "As for you, comrade," and he pointed his finger at him, "you have had a narrow escape."

"The joke has gone quite far enough, commandant; if you like, I will go to the district with you," said the laughing stranger.

"And bring that invisible whistler Marche-a-Terre along with you."

"Marche-a-Terre—who is that?" said the sailor, with every sign of genuine surprise.

"Did not some one whistle a minute ago?"

"If they did," said the other, "what has that to do with me, I wonder? I thought that your men, brought here no doubt to arrest me, were warning you of their approach."

"Was that really what you thought?"

"Eh, *mon Dieu!* Yes. Drink your glass of Bordeaux; it is delicious."

Perplexed by the sailor's astonishment, by the levity of his manner, and the almost childish appearance of his face, with its carefully curled fair hair, the commandant's mind hesitated among endless suspicions. He noticed Madame du Gua, who was trying to read the secret in her son's glances at Mlle. de Verneuil, and suddenly asked her—"Your age, citoyenne?"

"Alas! the laws of our Republic are growing very merciless, *Monsieur l'Officier;* I am thirty-eight years old."

"May I be shot if I believe a word of it. Marche-a-Terre is about; I heard him whistle, and you are Chouans in dis-

guise. *Tonnerre de Dieu!* I will have the inn surrounded and searched."

A whistle not unlike the sound he spoke of interrupted the commandant's speech. It came from the courtyard. Fortunately, Hulot hurried into the corridor, and did not notice the pallor that overspread Madame du Gua's face at the words. When Hulot beheld the whistler, a postilion harnessing his horses to the coach, his suspicions were allayed. It seemed to him so absurd that Chouans should risk themselves in the midst of Alençon that he returned in confusion.

"I forgive him, but some day he shall pay dear for the moments he has made us spend here," said the mother gravely, whispering to her son, and at that instant Hulot came into the room again. The brave officer clearly showed on his embarrassed face the expression of a mental struggle between the rigorous claims of duty and his own natural good nature. He still looked surly, perhaps because he thought that he had been mistaken, but he took the glass of Bordeaux and said—"Excuse me, comrade; but if your School sends out such youngsters for officers—"

"Are there not still younger ones among the brigands?" asked the so-called sailor, laughing.

"For whom did you take my son?" answered Mme. du Gua.

"For the Gars, the leader sent over to the Chouans and Vendeans by the English Ministry, and whose style is the Marquis of Montauran."

As he spoke the commandant still kept a close watch on the faces of the two suspected persons. They looked at each other with the peculiar expressions which two presumptuous and ignorant people might assume successively, and which might be translated by this dialogue: "Do you know what this means?"—"No; do you?"—"Not a bit of it."—"What does he mean to say?"—"He is dreaming"—and there followed the mocking jeer of folly, which thinks itself triumphant.

The mention of the Royalist general's name wrought in Marie de Verneuil's manners and unconcern a sudden alteration, which was only visible to Francine, the one person present who could read the almost imperceptible shades of expression on that young face. Completely baffled, the commandant picked up the two pieces of his sword, and looked at Mlle. de Verneuil. The warmth and excitement in her face had succeeded in stirring his own feelings; he said—"As for you, mademoiselle, I shall stick to my word, and to-morrow the fragments of my sword shall return to Bonaparte, unless—"

"Eh! What have I to do with your Bonapartes and your Republics, your Chouans, your King, and your Gars?" cried she, repressing with some difficulty an outburst of temper which would have been in very poor taste.

A strange excitement or waywardness brought a brilliant color to her face; it was clear that the whole world would become as nothing to this young girl from the moment when she singled out one living creature in it from all others. But suddenly she forced herself to be calm again, finding that all eyes were turned upon her as upon a principal personage. The commandant rose abruptly. Mlle. de Verneuil, anxious and disturbed, followed him, stopped him in the passage outside, and asked him in earnest tones—"Had you really very strong reasons for suspecting this young man to be the Gars?"

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!* That popinjay who came along with you, mademoiselle, had just told me that the travellers and courier had all been murdered by the Chouans, which I knew already; but I did *not* know that the name of the dead travellers was du Gua Saint-Cyr!"

"Oh, if Corentin is mixed up in it, I am not surprised at anything any longer," she said, with a gesture of disgust. The commandant withdrew, not daring to look at Mlle. de Verneuil, whose dangerous beauty had already perturbed his heart.

"If I had stayed there for ten more minutes," he said to

himself, as he went downstairs, "I should have been fool enough to pick up my sword again to escort her."

Mme. du Gua saw how the young man's eyes were fixed on the door through which Mlle. de Verneuil had made her exit, and spoke in his ear—"It is always the same with you! You will only come to your end through some woman or other. The sight of a doll makes you forget everything else. Why did you allow her to breakfast with us? What sort of demoiselle de Verneuil can she be who accepts invitations to breakfast with strangers, has an escort of Blues, and countermands them by a paper kept in reserve in her spencer like a love-letter? She is one of those vile creatures, by means of whom Fouché thinks to entrap you, and that letter which she produced authorized her to make use of the Blues against you."

"Really, madame," said the young man in a sharp tone that cut the lady to the heart and made her cheeks turn white, "her generosity is a flat contradiction to your theories. Be careful to remember that we are only brought together by the interests of the King. Can the universe be other than a void for you, who have had Charette at your feet? Could you live any longer save to avenge him?"

The lady stood lost in thought, like a man who watches the shipwreck of his fortunes from the strand, and only feels a stronger craving for his lost riches.

Mlle. de Verneuil came back and exchanged with the young man a smile and a look of gentle raillery. The prophecies of hope were the more flattering because the future seemed so uncertain, and the time that they might spend together so very brief.

The glance, however rapid it might be, was not lost on Mme. du Gua's discerning eyes. She saw what it meant, and her brow slightly contracted at once; her jealous thoughts could not be kept entirely unexpressed by her face. Francine was studying this woman; she saw her eyes sparkle and the color glow in her cheeks; a fiendish inspiration seemed to animate her face; she seemed to be in the throes of some

horrible convulsion; but this passed like a flash across her features, lightning could not be more rapid, nor death more swift. Mme. du Gua resumed her apparent sprightliness with such ready self-command that Francine thought she had been dreaming. For all that, she trembled as she discerned in the woman before her a nature at least as vehement as Mlle. de Verneuil's, and foresaw the alarming collisions that were sure to come to pass between two minds of this temper. She shuddered again when she saw Mlle. de Verneuil go up to the young officer, fling at him one of those passionate glances that intoxicate, and draw him by both hands toward the window, with mischievous coquetry.

"Now," said she, as she tried to read his eyes, "confess to me that you are not the citizen du Gua Saint-Cyr?"

"Yes, I am, mademoiselle."

"But both he and his mother were murdered the day before yesterday!"

"I am extremely sorry," he answered, smiling at her; "but however that may be, I am none the less obliged to you. I shall always remember you with deep gratitude, and I wish that I were in a position to prove it."

"I thought I had saved an Emigrant; but I like you better as a Republican."

She became embarrassed at the words, which seemed to have heedlessly dropped from her. Her lips grew redder. There was nothing in her face but a delightfully artless revelation of her feelings. Softly she dropped the young officer's hands, not through bashfulness because she had pressed them, but impelled by a thought within her heart wellnigh too heavy to bear. And so she left him intoxicated by his hopes. Then, quite suddenly, she seemed to repent within herself of this freedom, although these passing adventures of travel might seem to justify it. She stood once more on ceremony, took leave of her travelling companions, and vanished with Francine.

When they had reached their room, Francine locked her fingers together, and turned out the palms of her outstretched

hands, twisting her arms to do so, as she looked at her mistress, saying, "Ah, Marie! how many things have happened in such a short time! There is no one like you for these goings-on."

Mlle. de Verneuil sprang to Francine and put her arms round her neck.

"This is life!" she cried. "I am in heaven!"

"Or in hell, maybe," Francine answered.

"Yes—hell, if you like!" said Mlle. de Verneuil merrily. "Here, give me your hand; feel how my pulse beats! I am in a fever. Little matters all the world to me now! How often have I not seen him in my dreams! What a fine head that is of his, and how his eyes sparkle!"

"But will he love you?" asked the peasant girl with direct simplicity. Her voice faltered, and her face took a sober expression.

"Can you ask?" replied Mlle. de Verneuil. "Now tell me, Francine," she added, striking a half-comic, half-tragical attitude before her, "would he be so very hard to please?"

"Yes; but will the love last?" Francine answered, smiling.

For a moment the two remained struck dumb—Francine because she had disclosed so much knowledge of life, and Marie because, for the first time in her existence, she beheld a prospect of happiness in a love affair. She was leaning, as it were, over a precipice; and would fain try its depths, waiting for the sound of the pebble that she had thrown over, and, in the first instance, had thrown heedlessly.

"Ah, that is my business," she said with the gesture of a desperate gambler. "I have no compassion for a woman who is cast off; she has only herself to blame for her desertion. Once in my keeping, I shall know how to retain a man's heart through life and death." There was a moment's pause, and she added in a tone of surprise, "But how did you come by so much experience, Francine?"

"Mademoiselle," said the young countrywoman eagerly, "I can hear footsteps in the corridor—"

"Ah, not *his*," said the other, listening for them. "So that is the way you answer me! I understand you. I shall wait for your secret, or I shall guess it."

Francine was right. Three raps on the door interrupted their conversation, and Captain Merle soon showed his face after he heard Mlle. de Verneuil's invitation to enter. The captain made a military salute, ventured a sidelong glance at Mlle. de Verneuil, and, dazzled by the beautiful woman before him, could find nothing else to say than, "I am at your orders, mademoiselle!"

"So you have become my protector on the resignation of your chief of demi-brigade. Is not that what your regiment is called?"

"My superior officer, Adjutant-Major Gérard, sent me to you."

"So your commandant is afraid of me?" she inquired.

"Begging your pardon, mademoiselle, Hulot is not afraid; but ladies are not much in his line, you see, and it rather put him out to find his general wearing a mutch."

"It was his duty to obey his superiors for all that," Mlle. de Verneuil replied. "I have a liking for subordination—I give you warning—and I do *not* like resistance to my authority."

"It would be difficult," said Merle.

"Let us talk things over," Mlle. de Verneuil continued. "Your troops here are fresh; they will escort me to Mayenne, which I can reach to-night. Could we find fresh soldiers there so as to set out again at once without a halt? The Chouans do not know of our little expedition. If we travel at night in this way, we should have to be very unlucky indeed to meet with them in numbers sufficient to attack us. Let us see now; tell me if you think the plan feasible?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"How are the roads between Mayenne and Fougères?"

"Rough; and there are everlasting ups and downs—a regular squirrel-track."

"Let us be off at once!" said she; "and as we have no dangers to fear on the outskirts of Alençon, set out first, and we will soon overtake you."

"One might think she had been ten years in command," said Merle to himself as he went out. "Hulot was wrong about her; that girl is not one of the sort that make their living from feather beds. *Mille cartouches!* If Captain Merle means to be Adjutant-Major some day, I advise him not to take St. Michael for the Devil."

While Mlle. de Verneuil was taking counsel with the captain, Francine slipped out, intending to inspect from a corridor window a spot in the courtyard which had attracted her curiosity ever since her arrival in the inn. So rapt was her gaze upon the heap of straw in the stable that any one might have thought her engaged in prayer before the shrine of the Holy Virgin. Very soon she saw Mme. du Gua picking her way toward Marche-a-Terre with all the caution of a cat that tries not to wet its paws. At sight of the lady the Chouan rose and stood most respectfully before her. This strange occurrence revived Francine's curiosity. She sprang out into the yard, gliding along by the wall so that Mme. du Gua should not see her, and tried to hide herself behind the stable door. She held her breath, and walked on tiptoe, trying not to make the slightest sound, and succeeded in placing herself close to Marche-a-Terre without attracting his attention.

"And if, after you have made all these inquiries, you find that that is not her name," said the stranger lady to the Chouan, "you will shoot her down without mercy, as if she were a mad dog."

"I understand," said Marche-a-Terre.

The lady went; the Chouan put his red woollen cap on his head again, and stood scratching his ear like a man in doubt, when he saw Francine start up before him as if by magic.

"Saint Anne of Auray!" cried he, and, suddenly dropping his whip, he clasped his hands and stood enraptured.

A faint, red flush lighted up his rough face, and his eyes shone out like diamonds in the mud.

"Is that really Cottin's lass?" he asked in a stifled voice, audible to himself alone. "Aren't you just grand!" (*godaine*) he went on after a pause. This rather odd word, *godain*, *godaine*, in the patois of the country, serves rustic wooers to express the highest possible admiration of a combination of beauty and finery.

"I am afraid to touch you," Marche-a-Terre added; but, nevertheless, he stretched out his big hand to Francine to ascertain the weight of a thick gold chain which wound about her throat, and hung down to her waist.

"You had better not, Pierre!" Francine said, inspired by the woman's instinct to tyrannize wherever she is not oppressed. Francine drew back with much dignity after enjoying the Chouan's surprise; but there was plenty of kindliness in her looks to make up for her hard words. She came nearer again. "Pierre," she went on, "was not that lady talking to you about the young lady, my mistress?"

Marche-a-Terre stood in silence; his face, like the dawn, was a struggle between light and darkness. He looked first at Francine, then at the great whip that he had dropped, and, finally, back at the gold chain, which seemed to have for him an attraction quite as powerful as the face of the Breton maid; then, as if to put an end to his perplexities, he picked up his whip again, and uttered not a word.

"Oh, it is not difficult to guess that the lady has ordered you to kill my mistress," Francine continued. She knew the scrupulous loyalty of the gars, and wished to overcome his hesitation. Marche-a-Terre nodded significantly. For "Cottin's lass," this was an answer.

"Very well, then, Pierre, if anything should happen to her, no matter how slight, or if you should take so much as a hair of her head, we shall have seen each other for the last time; and we shall not even meet in eternity, for I shall be in Paradise, and you will go to hell!"

No demoniac exorcised by the offices of the Church performed in pomp in the days of yore could have shown more terror than Marche-a-Terre at this prophecy, uttered with a conviction that went far to assure him that it would really come to pass. The uncouth tenderness revealed in his first glances now struggled with a fanatical sense of duty every whit as exacting as love itself. He looked savage all at once as he noticed the air of authority assumed by his innocent former sweetheart. Francine explained the Chouan's glumness in her own fashion.

"So you will do nothing for me?" she said in a reproachful tone. The Chouan gave his sweetheart a look, black as the raven's wing, at the words.

"Are you your own mistress?" asked he, in a growl that no one but Francine could hear.

"Should I be here if I were?" she asked indignantly. "But what are you doing here? Still *Chouanning* and scouring the roads like a mad animal looking for some one to bite. Oh, Pierre, if you were reasonable you would come with me. This pretty young lady, who, I may tell you, was brought up in our house at home, has taken charge of me. I have two hundred livres invested income; mademoiselle gave five hundred crowns to buy my uncle Thomas's big house for me, and I have two thousand livres of savings besides."

But her smile and the enumeration of her riches failed of their effect; she still confronted Marche-a-Terre's inscrutable gaze.

"The *recteurs* have told us to fight," he replied. "There is an indulgence for every Blue that drops."

"But perhaps the Blues will kill you!"

He let his arms fall at his sides by way of reply, as if he regretted the meagreness of his sacrifice for God and the King. "And then what would become of me?" the girl went on sadly.

Marche-a-Terre looked at Francine like a man bereft of his faculties. His eyes seemed to dilate, two tears stole

down his rough cheeks and rolled in parallel lines over his goatskin raiment, a hollow groan came from his chest.

"Saint Anne of Auray! is that all you will say to me, Pierre, after we have been parted for seven years? How changed you are!"

"My love is always the same," the Chouan broke out in gruff tones.

"No," she murmured; "the King comes before me."

"I shall go," he said, "if you look at me in that way."

"Very well then, good-by," she said sadly.

"Good-by," echoed Marche-a-Terre. He seized Francine's hand, pressed it in his own and kissed it, made the sign of the cross, and escaped into the stable like some dog that has just purloined a bone.

"Pille-Miche," he called to his comrade, "I cannot see a bit. Have you your snuff-box about you?"

"Oh! *crê bleu*, what a fine chain!" said Pille-Miche, fumbling in a pocket contrived in his goatskin. He held out to Marche-a-Terre a little conical snuff-box, made out of a cow's-horn, in which Bretons keep the snuff that they grind for themselves in the long winter evenings. The Chouan raised his thumb so as to make a cup-shaped hollow in his left hand, as pensioners are wont to do when measuring their pinches of snuff, and shook the horn into it vigorously, Pille-Miche having unscrewed the nozzle. A fine dust was slowly shaken from the tiny hole at the end of this Breton appurtenance. Marche-a-Terre repeated this feat seven or eight times in silence, as if the powder possessed some virtue for changing the current of his thoughts. Then with a sudden involuntary gesture of despair, he flung the snuff-box to Pille-Miche and picked up a carbine that lay hidden in the straw.

"There is no use in taking seven or eight pinches at a time like that!" said the niggardly Pille-Miche.

"Forward!" cried Marche-a-Terre hoarsely. "There is some work for us to do." Some thirty Chouans, who were sleeping under the hayracks and in the straw, raised their

heads at this, and seeing Marche-a-Terre standing, vanished forthwith through a door which led into some gardens whence they could reach the open country.

When Francine left the stable she found the mailcoach ready to start. Mlle. de Verneuil and her two travelling companions were seated in it already. The Breton girl shuddered to see her mistress in the coach with, at her side, the woman who had just given orders to kill her. The "suspect" had placed himself opposite Marie, and as soon as Francine took her seat the heavy coach set out with all speed.

The gray clouds had vanished before the autumn sunlight, which brought a certain revival of gladness to the melancholy fields, as though the year were yet young. Many a pair of lovers read an augury in these signs in the sky. Silence prevailed among the travellers at first, to Francine's great surprise. Mlle. de Verneuil had returned to her former reserve; she kept her head slightly bent and her eyes downcast, while her hands were hidden under a sort of cloak in which she had wrapped herself. If she raised her eyes at all, it was to look at the changing landscape as she was whirled through it. She was secure of admiration, and was declining to take any notice of it, but her indifference seemed scarcely genuine, and suggested coquetry. There is a certain touching purity which dominates every fleeting phase of expression by which weaker souls reveal themselves, but there was no charm of this kind about this being, whose highly-wrought temperament had marked her out for the storms of passion. The stranger opposite was as yet altogether taken up with the delights of a newly-begun flirtation, and did not try to reconcile the inconsistencies in this extraordinary girl—a lofty enthusiast and a coquette. Did not her feigned serenity give him a chance to study her face at his leisure, rendered as beautiful now by repose as before by excitement? We are not very apt to find fault with anything that gives us pleasure.

In a coach it is not easy for a pretty woman to avoid the

eyes of her fellow-travellers; they turn to her in search of one more relief from the tedium of the journey. The young officer therefore took a pleasure in studying the striking and clear-cut outlines of her face, delighted to satisfy the cravings of a growing passion by gazing at her as at a picture, without giving annoyance by his persistence or causing the fair stranger to avoid his glances.

Sometimes the daylight brought out the transparent rose-hues of her nostrils, and the double curves that lie between the nose and the upper lip; or a faint sunbeam would shed its light upon every shade of color in her face, on the pearly white about her mouth and eyes, growing to a dead ivory tint at her throat and temples, and the rose-red in her cheeks. He watched admiringly the contrasts of the light and shadow underneath the masses of dark hair about her face, which lent to it one more transient grace; for everything is transient about woman, her yesterday's beauty is not her beauty of to-day, and this is lucky, perhaps, for her.

The sailor, as he called himself, was still at an age when a man finds bliss in the nothings that make up the whole of love; he watched with pleasure the incessant movements of her eyelids; the rise and fall of her bodice as she breathed fascinated him. Sometimes his fancy led him to detect a connection between the expression of her eyes and a scarcely discernible movement of her lips. For him every gesture was a revelation of the young girl's nature, every movement showed her to him in some new aspect. Some thought or other flickered over the rapidly changing features, a sudden flush of color overspread them, or they glowed with life as she smiled; and he would find inexpressible pleasure in the attempt to penetrate the secret thoughts of the mysterious woman before him. Everything about her was a snare, alike for the senses and the soul. The silence, so far from being a hindrance to an intimate understanding, was forging a chain of thought to unite them both. After several encounters with the stranger's glances Marie de Verneuil saw that this silence would compromise her; so she turned to

Mme. du Gua with one of those banal questions that serve to open a conversation; but even then she could not help bringing in a mention of the lady's son.

"How could you bring yourself to put your son into the navy, madame?" said she. "Do you not condemn yourself to a life of constant anxiety?"

"Mademoiselle, it is the lot of women—of mothers, I mean—to tremble constantly for their dearest treasures."

"Your son is very like you."

"Do you think so, mademoiselle?"

This serene acceptance of Mme. du Gua's statement as to her age made the young man smile, and provoked a new malignity in his supposed mother. Every glowing look that her son bent on Marie increased her hatred. Both the silence and the talk inflamed her anger to a fearful pitch, though it was concealed beneath a most amiable manner.

"You are quite mistaken, mademoiselle," said the stranger; "the navy is not more exposed to danger than the other service. Women ought not to dislike the navy, for have we not one immense superiority over the land forces in that we are always faithful to our mistresses?"

"Yes, because you cannot help it," laughed Mlle. de Verneuil.

"But it is faithfulness at any rate," said Mme. du Gua, in an almost melancholy voice.

The conversation grew more lively, turning upon matters which were only interesting to the three travellers. Under circumstances of this kind people with active minds are apt to give new significances to commonplace utterances; but beneath the apparently frivolous cross-fire of questions with which these two amused themselves, the feverish hopes and desires that stirred in them lay concealed. Marie was never off her guard, displaying a tact and astute shrewdness which taught Mme. du Gua that only by employing treachery and slander could she look to triumph over a rival whose wit was as formidable as her beauty.

The travellers overtook the escort, and the coach went

less rapidly on its way. The young sailor saw that there was a long hill to climb, and proposed to Mlle. de Verneuil that they should alight and walk. The young man's friendly politeness and courteous tact had its effect on the fair Parisian; he felt her consent to be a compliment.

"Are you of the same opinion, madame?" she asked of Mme. du Gua. "Will you not join our walk?"

"Coquette!" exclaimed the lady as she alighted.

Marie and the stranger walked together, and yet asunder. He already felt himself mastered by vehement desires, and was eager to break through the reserve with which she treated him—a reserve that did not deceive him in the least. He thought to succeed in this by bringing his lively conversational powers to bear upon his companion, with the debonair gayety of old France, that is sometimes light-hearted, sometimes earnest, readily moved to laughter, but always chivalrous—the spirit that distinguished the prominent men among the exiled aristocracy. But the lively Parisian lady met his attempts at frivolity in so disdainful a humor, rallied him with such malicious reproaches, and showed so marked a preference for the bold and elevated ideas that passed into his talk in spite of himself, that he soon perceived the way to please her.

So the conversation took another turn. The stranger thenceforward fulfilled the promises made by his eloquent face. Every moment he found new difficulties in understanding this siren, who was captivating him more and more; and was compelled to suspend his judgment upon a girl who took a capricious delight in contradicting each conclusion that he formed concerning her. The mere sight of her beauty had carried him away in the first instance, and now he felt himself strongly drawn toward this strange soul by a curiosity which Marie herself took pleasure in stimulating. Unconsciously their converse assumed a more intimate character; the indifferent tone which Mlle. de Verneuil had unsuccessfully tried to give to it had disappeared entirely.

Although Mme. du Gua had followed the lover-like pair,

they had unwittingly walked faster than she did, and soon found themselves about a hundred paces ahead of her. The two picturesque beings were treading the sandy road, absorbed in the childish pleasure of hearing their light footsteps sounding together, pleased that the same springlike rays of sunlight should envelop them both, glad to breathe the same air with the autumn scent of fallen leaves in it, which seemed to be a nourishment brought by the breeze for the sentimental melancholy of their growing love. Although neither of them appeared to regard their brief companionship as anything but an ordinary adventure, there was something in the sky above them, in the season and in the place, which gave their sentiments a tinge of soberness, and lent an appearance of passion to them. They began to praise the beauty of the day, and then fell to talking of their strange meeting, of the end of the pleasant intercourse so nearly approaching, and of how easy it is to become intimate upon a journey with people, who are lost to sight again almost directly after we meet them. At this last observation, the young man availed himself of a tacit permission which seemed to warrant him in making some sentimental confidences, and in venturing a declaration, like a man accustomed to situations of this kind.

"Do you notice, mademoiselle," he said, "how little our feelings flow in their accustomed channels in these times of terror in which we live? Is there not a striking and unexplainable spontaneity about everything that takes place around us? We love nowadays, or we hate, on the strength of a single glance. We are bound together for life, or we are severed with the same speed that brings us to the scaffold. We do everything in haste, like the nation in its ferment. We cling to each other more closely amid these perils than in the common course of life. Lately, in Paris, we have come to know, as men learn on the battlefield, all that is meant by a grasp of the hand."

"The thirst for a full life in a little space," she said, "was felt then because men used to have so short a time to live."

She gave a rapid glance at her companion, which seemed to put him in mind of the end of their brief journey, and added maliciously, "You have a very fair knowledge of life for a young man just leaving the Ecole polytechnique."

"What do you think of me?" he asked after a moment's pause; "tell me frankly and without hesitation."

"You wish in turn to acquire the right of speaking in like fashion of me?" she queried, laughing.

"You are not answering me," he said after another slight pause. "Beware! silence is very often an answer in itself."

"Did I not guess all that you wished you could tell me? *Eh, mon Dieu!* you have said too much already."

"Oh, if we understand each other," he said, smiling, "I have obtained more than I dared to hope."

She smiled so graciously at this that she seemed willing to engage in a courteous fence in words, in which a man delights to press a woman closely. Half in jest and half in earnest, they persuaded themselves that it was impossible that, each for each, they could ever be other than they were at that moment. The young man could fairly give himself up to a predilection which had no future before it, and Marie could laugh at him. When, in this way, they had set an imaginary barrier between them, both of them seemed eager to take full advantage of the dangerous liberty which they had just acquired. Marie suddenly slipped on a stone, and stumbled.

"Take my arm," said the stranger.

"I shall have to do so, giddy-pate! because you would grow so conceited if I declined. Would it not look as if I were afraid of you?"

"Ah, mademoiselle!" he said, pressing her arm against him to let her feel the beating of his heart; "you have just made me very vain by this favor."

"Well, then, my readiness to grant it will dispel your illusions."

"Do you want to arm me already against the dangerous emotions you inspire?"

"I beg that you will stop this talk," she said; "do not involve me in a labyrinth of boudoir small-talk and the jargon of drawing-rooms. I do not like to find the sort of ingenuity that any fool can attain to in a man of your calibre. Look! Here are we, out in the open country, under a glorious sky; everything before us and above us is great. You wish to inform me that I am pretty; is that not so? But I can tell that quite well from your eyes, and moreover I am aware of it; I am not a woman to be gratified by civil speeches. Possibly you would speak to me of your *sentiments?*" she went on, with sardonic emphasis on the last word. "Could you really think me foolish enough to believe in a sudden sympathy powerful enough to control a whole life by the memories of one morning?"

"Not the memories of a morning," he replied, "but of a beautiful woman who has shown herself to be magnanimous as well."

"You forget," she said, laughing, "much greater attractions than these. I am a stranger to you, and everything about me must seem very unusual in your eyes—my name, rank, and position, and my freedom of thought and action."

"You are no stranger to me," he exclaimed. "I have divined your nature; I would not add one perfection more to your completeness, unless it were a little more belief in the love that you inspire at first sight."

"You poor seventeen-year-old boy! You are prating of love already!" she smiled. "Very well, so be it then. It is a stock subject of conversation when any two creatures meet, like the wind and the weather, when we pay a call. Let us take it then. You will find no false modesty nor littleness in me. I can hear the word 'love' pronounced without blushing. It has been said to me so very often, but not in tones that the heart uses, that it has grown almost meaningless in my ears. I have heard it repeated everywhere, in the theatre, in books and in society, but I have never met with anything that resembled the magnificent sentiment itself."

"Have you looked for it?"

"Yes." The word fell from her so carelessly that the young man started and gazed at Marie as if his views with regard to her character and condition had undergone a sudden change.

"Mademoiselle, are you girl or woman, an angel or a fiend?" he asked with ill-concealed emotion.

"Both the one and the other," she answered him, smiling. "Is there not something both diabolical and angelic in a girl who has never loved, does not love, and possibly never will love?"

"And you are happy for all that?" he asked, with a certain freedom of tone and manner, as if this woman who had liberated him had fallen in his esteem already.

"Happy?" she asked. "Oh, no! When I happen to think how solitary I am, and of the tyranny of social conventions which perforce makes a schemer of me, I envy man his prerogatives. Then at the thought of all the means with which nature has endowed us women, so that we can surround you and entangle you in the meshes of an invisible power that not one of you can resist, my lot here has its attractions for me; and then all at once it seems to me a pitiful thing, and I feel that I should despise a man who could be deceived by these vulgar wiles. Sometimes, in short, I recognize the yoke we must bear with approval; then, again, it is hateful to me, and I rebel against it. Sometimes a longing stirs within me for that lot of devotion which makes a woman so fair and noble a thing, and then again I am consumed by a desire for power. This is perhaps the natural struggle between good and evil instincts, by which everything lives here below. Angel or fiend, did you say? Ah, I do not recognize my double nature to-day for the first time. We women know our own insufficiency even better than you do. Instinctively we expect in everything a perfection which is no doubt impossible. But," she sighed as she turned her eyes to the sky, "there is one thing which ennobles us in your eyes—"

"And that is—?" asked he.

"Well, that is the fact that we are all struggling more or less against our destiny of incompleteness."

"Mademoiselle, why must we take leave of you to-night?"

"Ah!" she said, smiling at the glowing look the young man turned upon her; "let us go back to the coach, the fresh air is not good for us," and Marie hurried back to it. As the stranger followed he pressed her arm, with scanty respect for her, but in a manner which expressed both his admiration and the feelings which had gained the mastery over him. She quickened her pace; the sailor guessed that she meant to escape from a suit which might be urged upon her; and this made him the more vehemently eager. He risked everything to gain a first favor from this woman, and said diplomatically—"Shall I tell you a secret?"

"Oh, at once, if it relates to your own affairs."

"I am not in the service of the Republic. Where are you going? I will go with you."

Marie shuddered violently at these words. She withdrew her arm from his and put both hands before her face to hide the red flush, or the pallor it may be, that wrought a change in her features; then in a moment she uncovered her face and said in a tremulous voice—"So you began as you would fain have ended, by deceiving me?"

"Yes," he said. She turned her back on the bulky coach toward which they were walking, and almost started to run.

"But just now the fresh air was not good—" began the stranger.

"Oh, it is different now," she said with a sad note in her voice, and she walked on; a storm of thoughts was raging within her.

"You are silent?" the stranger said. His heart was full of joyous anticipation of pleasure to come.

"Oh!" she cried briefly, "how quickly the tragedy has begun!"

"What tragedy are you talking of?" he inquired. She stopped short, scanning the pupil from the Ecole with both

fear and curiosity in her looks, then she concealed her troubled feelings beneath an inscrutable serenity; evidently for so young a woman she had no small practical knowledge of life.

"Who are you?" she went on. "But I know who you are. I suspected you at first sight. Are you not the Royalist chief called the Gars? The ex-bishop of Autun was quite right when he cautioned us to believe in our forebodings of ill."

"What interest can there be for you in knowing that fellow?"

"What interest could he have in concealing his identity when I have saved his life already?" She began to laugh, but it was with visible effort. "I did wisely," she said, "when I prevented you from making love to me. Understand this, sir, you are abhorrent to me. I am a Republican, you are a Royalist; I would give you up if I had not passed my word, if I had not saved your life once already, and if—" She broke off. These stormy revulsions of feeling, the struggle which she scarcely troubled herself to hide from him any longer, alarmed the stranger. He tried to watch her, but to no purpose.

"Let us part at once, I will have it so. Good-by!" said she. She turned sharply from him, took a step or two, and then came back again.

"Nay," she said, "it is of immense importance to me to know who you really are. Do not hide anything; tell me the truth. Who are you? You are no more a pupil of the Ecole polytechnique than a seventeen-year-old—"

"I am a sailor, ready to leave the sea to follow you wherever your fancy may lead me. If I am fortunate enough to represent a puzzle of some sort to you, I shall be very careful not to extinguish your interest in it. Why should we bring the grave cares of real life into the life of the heart, in which we were coming to understand one another so well?"

"Our souls could have met and known each other," she

said earnestly. "But I have no right to demand your confidence, sir. You shall never know the extent of your obligations to me; I will say no more." They went some little way in absolute silence.

"You take a great interest in my life," the stranger began.

"For pity's sake, sir, either give me your name, or do not speak. You are a child, and I am sorry for you," she added, shrugging her shoulders.

The persistent way in which his fellow traveller set herself to learn his secret brought the supposed sailor into a predicament between ordinary prudence and his desires. A powerful attraction lies in the displeasure of a woman we long to win; and when she yields and relents, no less than in her anger, her sway is absolute; she seizes upon so many fibres of man's heart as she subdues and penetrates it. Was her vexation one more wile of the coquette in Mlle. de Verneuil? In spite of the fever that burned within him, the stranger had sufficient remaining self-control to mistrust a woman who wished to extort his secret of life and death from him. He held the hand which she absently allowed him to take. "Why," said he to himself, "should my blundering, which sought to add a future to to-day, have destroyed all the charm of it instead?"

Mlle. de Verneuil, who seemed to be in great trouble, was silent.

"In what way is it possible that I can give you pain?" he began, "and what can I do to soothe you?"

"Tell me your name." It was his turn to be silent now, and they walked on some steps further. Then Mlle. de Verneuil suddenly stopped, like some one who has made a momentous decision.

"Marquis of Montauran," she said with dignity, though she could not altogether hide the inward agitation which gave a kind of nervous trembling to her features, "I am happy to do you a service, at whatever personal cost. Here we must separate. The coach and the escort are too neces-

sary for your safety for you to decline to accept either of them. You have nothing to fear from the Republicans; all those soldiers you see are men of honor, and I shall give orders to the adjutant which he will carry out faithfully. I myself shall return on foot to Alençon; my maid and a few of the soldiers will go back with me. Heed me well, for your life is in danger. If before you are in safety you should meet the detestable *muscadin* whom you saw in the inn, then you must fly, for he would immediately give you up. As for me—" here she paused, and then went on in a low voice as she kept back the tears, "I shall plunge once more into the miseries of life with a proud heart. Farewell, sir. May you be happy, and, farewell—"

She beckoned to Captain Merle, who had reached the top of the hill. The young man was not prepared for such a sudden development as this.

"Stay!" he cried with a very fair imitation of despair. The stranger had been so taken by surprise at this singular freak on the girl's part, that though he was ready, at that moment, to sacrifice his life to gain her, he invented a pitiable subterfuge to satisfy Mlle. de Verneuil without revealing his name.

"Your guess was a very near one," he said; "I am an Emigrant under sentence of death, and I am called the Vicomte de Bauvan. I came back to be near my brother in France, drawn by the love of my country. I hope to be struck out of the list through the influence of Mme. de Beauharnais, who is now the First Consul's wife; but if that fails, I mean at any rate to die on French soil—to fall fighting by the side of my friend Montauran. I am going, in the first place, secretly into Brittany, by the help of a passport that I have succeeded in obtaining, to learn if any of my property there yet remains to me."

Mlle. de Verneuil studied the young gentleman as he spoke with keen attention. She tried to weigh the truth of his words, but it was in her nature to be trustful and credulous, and her appearance of tranquillity slowly re-

turned as she asked, "Is all that you have just told me true, sir?"

"Absolutely true," the stranger repeated, who appeared to regard veracity but slightly in his dealings with women. Mlle. de Verneuil heaved a deep sigh like one coming to life again. "Ah! I am really happy!" cried she.

"So you quite hate my poor Montauran!"

"No," she said; "you cannot understand me. I did not wish that you should be threatened by dangers from which I will try to shield him, since he is your friend."

"Who told you that Montauran was in danger?"

"Oh, sir, if I had not just left Paris, where nothing but his adventure is being talked of, the commandant told us quite sufficient about him at Alençon, I think."

"Then I am going to ask you in what way you could shield him from danger."

"And suppose I should not choose to answer!" she said, with the haughty expression which women so readily assume to conceal their feelings. "What right have you to know my secrets?"

"The right that a man who loves you ought to have."

"Already?—" said she. "No, sir, you do not love me; for you I am simply a fitting object for a passing affair of gallantry. Did I not read your thoughts at the first glance? Could a woman with any experience of good society, as manners are at present, be deceived about you, when she hears a pupil from the Ecole polytechnique choose his expressions as you do, and when he so clumsily disguises his courtly breeding beneath an appearance of Republicanism. There is a trace of powder about your hair, an aristocratic atmosphere about you which any woman of the world would recognize at once. It was because I trembled for you that I so promptly dismissed my director, whose wits are as keen as a woman's. A genuine Republican officer from the Ecole, sir, would never have thought to make a conquest of me, nor would he have taken me for a good-looking adventuress. Permit me, M. de Bauvan, to put a small piece

of feminine reasoning before you. Are you really so young that you do not know that the most difficult conquests to make are of those creatures of our sex whose market value is known and who are satiated with pleasure? To gain that kind of woman, so they say, great inducements are needed, and she only surrenders at her own caprice; to attempt to make any impression upon her would be the acme of self-conceit in a man. Let us leave out of the question the women of the class in which you are so gallant as to include me (because it is understood that they all must be beautiful), and you ought to see that a witty and beautiful young woman of good birth (for you concede those advantages to me) is not to be purchased—there is but one way of winning her, she must be loved.. Now you understand me! If she loves, and condescends to folly, there must be something great in it to justify her in her own eyes. Pardon an exuberance of reasoning, not often met with in persons of my sex; but for your own sake, and—for mine," she added, with a bend of her head, "I would not have either of us deceived as to the worth of the other, nor would I have you believe that Mlle. de Verneuil, whether fiend or angel, girl or woman, could allow herself to be captivated by the commonplaces of gallantry."

"Mademoiselle," began the supposed viscount, whose surprise was extreme, although he concealed it, and who suddenly became once more a very fine gentleman, "I beg of you to believe that I will look upon you as a very noble woman, full of lofty and generous feeling, or as a kind-hearted girl—whichever you choose."

"I do not ask so much of you, sir," she said, laughing. "Leave me my incognito. My mask, moreover, fits more closely than yours does, and it pleases me to retain it, if only that I may know whether people who speak of love to me are sincere. . . . Do not venture to approach me so heedlessly. Hear me, sir," she went on, grasping his arm firmly, "if you could satisfy me that your love was sincere, no power on earth should sunder us. Yes, I could

wish to share in the larger life of a man, to be wedded to lofty ambitions and great thoughts. Unfaithfulness is impossible to noble hearts; constancy is a part of their natural strength. I should be always loved, always happy. But yet, I should not be ready at all times to lay myself under the feet of the man I loved as a step upon which he might rise in his career. I could not give up all things for him, endure all things from him, and still love on, even when he had ceased to love me. I have never yet ventured to confide the longings of my own heart to another, nor to speak of the impassioned impulses of the enthusiasm that consumes me; but I can readily speak to you of them to some extent, because the moment that you are in safety we shall separate."

"Separate?—never!" he cried, electrified by the tones of her voice, through which a powerful soul vibrated, a soul at strife, as it seemed, with some vast thought.

"Are you free?" she asked with a scornful glance at him which made him shrink.

"Oh, free—yes; but for the sentence of death."

Then she spoke, and her voice was full of bitterness, "If this were not all a dream, what a glorious life ours should be! But let us commit no follies, though I may have talked foolishly. Everything seems doubtful when I think of all that you ought to become before you can appreciate me at my just worth."

"And nothing would be doubtful to me if you would be mine—"

"Hush!" she cried, as she heard the words, with a genuine ring of passion in them; "the air is certainly no longer wholesome for us, let us go back to our chaperons."

It was not long before the coach overtook the two, who resumed their places, and they went on in silence for several leagues. If both of them had plenty to think about, their eyes henceforth avoided each other no more. Each seemed to have, since their conversation, an equal interest in watching the other, and in keeping an important secret hidden;

yet each also felt attracted to the other by a desire which had risen to the degree of passion, as each recognized characteristics which enhanced the pleasure they expected to receive from union or from conflict. Perhaps both of them, embarked upon their lives of adventure, had come to the strange condition of mind when, either from weariness, or by way of a challenge to fate, we decline to reflect seriously over the course we are pursuing, and yield ourselves up to the caprices of fortune, precisely because there is but one possible issue, which we behold as the inevitable result of it all. Are there not abysses and declivities in the moral as in the physical world, wherein vigorous natures love to plunge and endanger their existence, with the joy of a gambler who stakes his whole fortune on one throw? Mlle. de Verneuil and the young noble had in a manner come to understand these ideas, which were common to them both since the conversation which had given rise to them; and both had suddenly made great progress when the sympathy of the soul had followed that of their senses. For all that, the more inevitably they felt drawn toward each other, the more they became absorbed in unconsciously counting up the amount of happiness to come for them, if only for the sake of the additional pleasure.

The young man had not recovered from his amazement at the depths of thought in this extraordinary girl; and he began with wondering how she could combine so much experience with such youthful freshness. He next thought that he discerned an intense desire to appear innocent in the studied innocence of Marie's general behavior; he suspected this to be assumed. He took himself to task for his delight, and could only see a clever actress in this fair stranger. He was quite right. Mlle. de Verneuil, like all girls who have been early thrown on the world, became more and more reserved as her feelings grew warmer; and, very naturally, she assumed that prudish mien which women use successfully to conceal their violent desires. All women would fain meet love with a maiden soul, and when it is theirs no

longer, their hypocrisy is a tribute with which they welcome love's coming. These were the thoughts that passed rapidly through the mind of the noble, and gave him pleasure.

Both of them, in fact, could not but make some progress in love by this examination. In this way a lover swiftly reaches the point where the defects in his mistress are so many reasons for loving her the more. Mlle. de Verneuil's meditations lasted longer than those of the Emigrant; perhaps her imagination took flight over a wider stretching future. He was obeying but one of a thousand impulses that go to make up a man's experience in life; but the girl foresaw her whole future, taking a pleasure in making it fair and full of happiness and of great and noble ideas. So in these dreams she was happy, the present and the future, her wild fancies, and the actual reality alike charmed her; and Marie now sought to retrace her steps, the better to establish her power over the young man's heart, acting in this instinctively, as all women do.

After she had determined to surrender herself entirely, she wished, so to speak, to yield inch by inch. She would fain have recalled every action, every look and word in the past, to make them in accord with the dignity of a woman who is loved; her eyes at times expressed a kind of terror as she brooded over the bold attitude she had assumed in their late conversation. But as she looked at his resolute face again, she thought that one so strong must needs be generous too, and exulted within herself that a lot more glorious than that of most other women had fallen to her, in that her lover was a man of powerful character, a man with a death-sentence hanging over him, who had just put his own life in peril to make war upon the Republic. The thought that such a soul as this was hers alone, with no other to share it, gave a different complexion to everything else. Between that moment, only five hours ago, when she had arranged her face and voice so as to attract this gentleman, and the present, when she could perturb him with a glance, there lay a differ-

ence as great as between a dead and a living world. Beneath her frank laughter and blithe coquetry lay a hidden and mighty passion tricked out, like misfortune, in a smile.

In Mlle. de Verneuil's state of mind everything connected with external life partook of the nature of a phantom show. The coach passed through villages, and over hills and valleys, which left no traces in her memory. She reached Mayenne, the escort of soldiers was changed, Merle came to speak to her, and she answered him, she crossed the town, and they went on again;—but faces and houses, streets, and landscapes, and men, passed by her like the shadowy forms of a dream. Night came on. Marie travelled along the road to Fougères by the soft light of the brilliant stars in the sky, and it never struck her that there was any change in the heaven above her. She neither knew where Mayenne was, nor Fougères, nor her own destination; that, in a few hours, she might have to part with the man whom she had chosen, and by whom, as she thought, she herself had been chosen too, was an utter impossibility to her. Love is the one passion which knows neither past nor future. If she betrayed her thoughts in words at times, the sentences that fell from her were almost meaningless, but in her lover's heart they echoed like promises of joy. There were two who looked on at this new-born passion, and its progress under their eyes was alarmingly rapid. Francine knew Marie as thoroughly as the stranger lady knew the young man; and past experience led them to expect in silence some terrific catastrophe. As a matter of fact, it was not long before they saw the close of this drama, which Mlle. de Verneuil had, perhaps, in words of unconscious ill omen, entitled a tragedy.

When the four travellers had come about a league out of Mayenne, they heard a horseman coming toward them at a furious pace. As soon as he caught them up, he bent down and looked in the coach for Mlle. de Verneuil, who recognized Corentin. This ill-omened individual took it upon himself to make a significant gesture with a familiarity which for her had something scathing in it, and then de-

parted, having made her cold and wretched by this vulgar signal.

This occurrence seemed to affect the Emigrant disagreeably, which fact was by no means lost on his supposed mother; but Marie touched him lightly, and her look seemed to seek a refuge in his heart, as if there lay the one shelter that she had on earth. The young man's brow grew clear, as he felt a thrill of emotion, that his mistress should thus have allowed him to see, inadvertently as it were, the extent of her attachment to him. All her coquetry had vanished before an inexplicable dread, and Love had shown himself for a moment unveiled. Neither of them spoke, as if the sweet moment so might last a little longer. Unluckily, Mme. du Gua in their midst saw everything; like a miser giving a banquet, she seemed to count their morsels, and to measure out their life.

Altogether absorbed in their happiness, and without a thought of the way they had come, the two lovers arrived at the part of the road which lies along the bottom of the valley of Ernée, forming the first of the three valleys among which the events took place with which this story opened. Francine saw and pointed out strange forms which seemed to move like shadows through the trees and the *ajoncs* that bordered the fields. As the coach came toward these shadows, there was a general discharge of muskets, and the whistling of balls over their heads told the travellers that all these phantoms were substantial enough. The escort had fallen into an ambush.

At this sharp fusillade, Captain Merle keenly regretted his share in Mlle. de Verneuil's miscalculation. She had thought that the quick night journey would be attended with so little risk that she had only allowed him to bring sixty men. Acting under Gérard's orders, the captain immediately divided the little troop into two columns to hold the road on either side, and both officers advanced at a running pace through the fields of broom and furze, seeking to engage their adversaries before even learning their numbers.

The Blues began to beat up the thick undergrowth right and left with rash intrepidity, and kept up an answering fire upon the bushes of broom from which the Chouan volley had come.

Mlle. de Verneuil's first impulse had led her to spring out of the coach and to run back, so as to put some distance between her and the scene of the fray. But she grew ashamed of her fright; and, under the influence or the desire to grow great in the eyes of her beloved, she stood quite still, and tried to make a cool survey of the fight. The Emigrant followed her, took her hand, and held it to his heart.

"I was frightened," she said, smiling, "but now—"

Just at that moment her terrified maid called to her, "Take care, Marie!" But as Francine attempted to spring from the coach, she felt the grasp of a strong hand arrest her. The heavy weight of that huge hand drew a sharp cry from her; she turned and made not another sound when she recognized Marche-a-Terre's face.

"So I must owe to your fears the disclosure of the sweetest of all secrets for the heart," the stranger said to Mlle. de Verneuil. "Thanks to Francine, I have found out that you are called by the gracious name of Marie—Marie, the name that has been on my lips in every sorrow I have known! Marie, the name that henceforth I shall utter in joy. I shall never more pronounce it without committing sacrilege, without confusing my religion with my love! But will it be a sin, after all, to love and pray at the same time?" They pressed eash other's hands fervently as he spoke, and looked at each other in silence; the strength of their feelings had taken from them all power of expressing them.

"There is no harm meant for you people," Marche-a-Terre said roughly to Francine. There was a note of menace and reproach in the hoarse guttural sounds of his voice; he laid a stress upon every word in a way that paralyzed the innocent peasant girl.

For the first time she was confronted with cruelty in

Marche-a-Terre's expression. Moonlight seemed the only suitable illumination for such a face. The fierce Breton, with his cap in one hand and his heavy carbine in the other, and with his squat-gnomelike form in the cold white rays of light which give everything an unfamiliar look, seemed to belong rather to fairyland than to this world. There was a shadowy swiftness about the coming of this phantom and his reproachful exclamation. He turned immediately to Mme. du Gua and exchanged some earnest words with her. Francine had forgotten her Bas-Breton, and could make nothing of their talk. The lady seemed to be giving a complication of orders to Marche-a-Terre, and the short conference was terminated by an imperious gesticulation on her part, as she pointed out the two lovers to the Chouan.

Before he obeyed her, Marche-a-Terre gave Francine one last look. He seemed to be sorry for her, and would have spoken, but the Breton girl felt that her lover was obliged to keep silent. There were furrows in the rough sunburned skin on his forehead; the man's brows were drawn together in a heavy frown. Would he disobey this renewed order to take Mlle. de Verneuil's life? Mme. du Gua, no doubt, thought him the more hideous for this grimace, but to Francine there was an almost tender gleam in his eyes. The look told her that it was in her woman's power to direct that fierce will, and she hoped yet to establish her sway after God's in this wild heart.

Marie's tender conversation was interrupted by Mme. du Gua, who caught hold of her with a cry, as if danger was at hand. She had recognized one of the Royalist Committee from Alençon, and her sole object was to gain for him an opportunity of speaking to the Emigrant.

"Mistrust the girl whom you met at the sign of the 'Three Moors'!" so said the Chevalier de Valois in the young man's ear, and then both he and the Breton pony which he rode disappeared in the bushes of broom whence he had issued. The sharp rolling fire of the skirmish became at this moment

astonishingly hot, but the combatants could not come to close quarters.

"Is not this attack a feint, adjutant, so that they may kidnap our travellers and hold them for ransom?" suggested Clef-des-Cœurs.

"Devil fetch me, you are on the right track!" was Gérard's answer, as he flung himself on the road.

The Chouan fire grew slacker. They had gained their object in the skirmish when the Chevalier's communication was made to the chief. Merle saw them drawing off through the hedges, a few at a time, and did not consider it expedient to engage in a useless and dangerous struggle. The captain had a chance to hand Mlle. de Verneuil back into the carriage, for there stood the noble, like one thunderstruck. The Parisian in her surprise got in without availing herself of the Republican's courtesy; she turned to look at her lover, saw him standing there motionless, and was bewildered by the sudden change just wrought in him by the Chevalier's words. Slowly the young Emigrant returned; his manner disclosed a feeling of intense disgust.

"Was I not right?" Mme. du Gua said in his ear, as she went back with him to the coach. "We are certainly in the hands of a creature who has struck a bargain for your life; but since she is fool enough to be smitten with you instead of attending to her business, do not behave yourself like a child, but pretend that you love her until we reach the Vivetière, and once there— Is he really in love with her already?" she added to herself, for the young man did not move, and stood like one lost in dreams.

The coach rolled on almost noiselessly over the sandy road. At the first glance round about her everything seemed changed for Mlle. de Verneuil. The shadow of death had stolen across love already. The differences were the merest shades perhaps; but such shades as these are as strongly marked as the most glaring hues for a woman who loves. Francine had learned from Marche-a-Terre's expression that Mlle. de Verneuil's fate, over which she had bidden him to

watch, was in other hands than his. Whenever she met her mistress's eyes, she turned pale, and could scarcely keep back the tears. The rancor prompting a feminine revenge was but ill concealed by the feigned smiles of the stranger lady. The sudden change in her manner, the elaborate kindness for Mlle. de Verneuil, infused into her voice and expression, was sufficient to alarm any quick-sighted woman. Mlle. de Verneuil shuddered instinctively, and asked herself, "Why did I shudder? Is she not his mother?" But she trembled in every limb as she suddenly asked herself, "But is she really his mother?" Then she saw the precipice before her, and a final glance at the man's face made it plain to her.

"This woman loves him!" she thought. "But why should she overwhelm me with attentions after having shown so much coolness to me? Is it possible that she fears me, or am I lost?"

As for the *Emigré*, he was red and pale by turns; he retained his apparently calm manner by lowering his eyes, to conceal the strange emotions that warred within him. His lips were pressed together so tightly that their gracious curving outlines were disturbed; a yellowish tint, due to the violent conflict in his mind, overspread his face. Mlle. de Verneuil could not even discover if there was a lingering trace of love in all this passion. Woods lined the road on either side at this spot, and it became so dark that the mute actors in the drama could no longer question each other with their eyes. The sough of the wind rustling through the woods, and the even paces of their escort, gave a tinge of awe to the time and place, a solemnity that quickens the beating of the heart.

Mlle. de Verneuil could not long seek in vain for the cause of the estrangement. The recollection of Corentin flashed through her mind, and with that the idea of her real destiny rose up suddenly before her. For the first time since the morning, she fell to thinking seriously over her position. Hitherto she had given herself up to the joy of being loved, without a thought of the future or of the past. She grew

unable to bear her agony of soul any longer alone, and, with the meek patience of love, sat waiting, beseeching one glance of the young man. There was such a touching eloquence about her mute passionate entreaty, her shudder, and her white face, that he wavered a moment—the catastrophe was but the more complete.

"Are you feeling ill, mademoiselle?" he inquired. There was no trace of tenderness in his voice. His look and gesture, the very question itself, all served to convince the poor girl that all that had happened during the day had been part of a soul-mirage, which was now dispersing as half-formed clouds are borne away by the wind.

"Am I feeling ill?" she replied, with a constrained laugh: "I was just going to put the same question to you."

"I thought you both understood each other," said Mme. du Gua, with assumed good nature.

But neither Mlle. de Verneuil nor the young noble made her any answer. The girl thus grievously offended for the second time was vexed to find that her all-powerful beauty had lost its force. She knew that she could discover the reason of this state of things whenever she chose, but she was not anxious to look into it; and for the first time, perhaps, a woman shrank back from learning a secret. There are in our lives far too many situations when, either by dint of overmuch thinking, or through some heavy calamity, our ideas become disconnected, have no foundation in fact, and no basis to start from; the links that bind the present to the future and to the past are severed. This was Mlle. de Verneuil's condition. She bowed her head, lay back in the carriage, and stayed in this position like an uprooted shrub. She took no notice of any one, she saw nothing around her, but suffered in silence, wrapping herself about in her sorrow, a deliberate dweller in the solitary world whither unhappiness betakes itself for shelter. Some ravens flew croaking over them; but although in her, as in all strong natures, there was a superstitious spot, she gave no heed to them. The travellers went on their way in silence for some time.

"Sundered already!" said Mlle. de Verneuil to herself. "And yet nothing about me could have told him! Could it have been Corentin? But it is not to Corentin's interest. Who can have risen up to accuse me? I have scarcely been beloved, and here already I am aghast at being forsaken. I have sown love, and I reap contempt. So it is decreed by fate that I shall never do more than see the happiness that I must always lose!"

There was a trouble within her heart that was new in her experience, for she really loved now, and for the first time. But she was not so overcome by her pain that she could not oppose to it the pride natural to a young and beautiful woman. Her love was still her own secret; the secret that torture often fails to draw had not escaped her. She raised her head, ashamed that her mute suffering should indicate the extent of the passion within her, showed a smiling face, or rather a smiling mask, gave a gay little shake of the head, controlling her voice, so as to show no sign of the change in it.

"Where are we now?" she asked of Captain Merle, who always kept at a little distance from the coach.

"Three leagues and a half from Fougères, mademoiselle."

"Then we shall very soon be there now," said she, to induce him to begin to talk, her mind being fully made up to favor the young captain with some mark of her consideration.

"Those leagues," replied the delighted Merle, "are no great matter, except that hereabout they never let anything come to an end. As soon as you reach the upland at the top of this hill that we are climbing, you will see another valley just like the one we are leaving behind, and then on the horizon you can see the top of La Pèlerine. God send that the Chouans will be so obliging as not to have their revenge up there. But as you can suppose, we don't get on very fast, going up and down hill in this way. From La Pèlerine again you will see—"

The Emigrant trembled slightly at that word for the

second time, but so slightly that Mlle. de Verneuil alone observed it.

"What may this La Pèlerine be?" the girl inquired vivaciously, interrupting the captain, who was quite taken up by his Breton topography.

"It is the summit of a hill," Merle answered. "It gives its name to the valley here in Maine, which we are just going to enter. The hill is the dividing line between that province and the valley of the Couësnon; Fougères lies at the very end of the valley, and that is the first town you come to in Brittany. We had a fight there against the Gars and his bandits at the end of Vendémiaire. We were bringing over some conscripts, and they had a mind to kill us on the border so as to stop in their own country; but Hulot is a tough customer, and he gave them—"

"Then you must have seen the Gars?" she asked. "What sort of man is he?" and all the time her keen malicious eyes were never withdrawn from the pretended Vicomte de Bauvan's face.

"*Oh, mon Dieu!* mademoiselle," replied Merle, interrupted again as usual; "he is so very much like the citizen du Gua that, if it were not for the uniform of the Ecole polytechnique that he is wearing, I would bet it was the same man."

Mlle. de Verneuil stared hard at the cool and impassive young man who was looking contemptuously back at her, but she could see nothing about him that revealed any feeling of fear. By a bitter smile she let him know that she had just discovered the secret he had so dishonorably kept. Then her nostrils dilated with joy; she bent her head to one side, so that she could scrutinize the young noble, and at the same time keep Merle in view, and said to the Republican in a mocking voice—"This chief is giving the First Consul a good deal of anxiety, captain. There is plenty of daring in him, they say, but he will engage in adventures of certain kinds like a hare-brained boy, especially if there is a woman in the case."

"We are just reckoning upon that to square our accounts with him," said the captain. "If we can get hold of him for a couple of hours, we will put a little lead in those brains of his. If he were to come across us, the fellow from Coblentz would do as much for us; he would turn us off into the dark, so it is tit for tat."

"Oh, you have nothing to fear," said the Emigrant. "Your soldiers will never get as far as La Pèlerine; they are too tired; so if you agree to it, they could take a rest only a step or two from here. My mother will alight at the Vivetière, and there is the road leading to it, a few gunshots away. These two ladies would be glad to rest there too; they must be tired after coming without a break in the journey from Alençon hither." He turned to his mistress with constrained politeness as he went on—"And, since mademoiselle has been so generous as to make our journey safe as well as pleasant, perhaps she will condescend to accept an invitation to sup with my mother? Times, in fact, are not so distracted but that a hogshead of cider can be found at the Vivetière to tap for your men. The Gars will not have made off with everything; or so my mother thinks, at any rate—"

"Your mother?" interrupted Mlle. de Verneuil satirically, without making any response to the strange invitation which was held out to her.

"Does my age seem no longer credible to you now that the evening has come, mademoiselle?" asked Mme. du Gua. "I was unfortunately married while very young; my son was born when I was fifteen—"

"Are you not mistaken, madame? Should you not have said thirty?"

Madame du Gua turned pale as she swallowed this piece of sarcasm. She longed for the power to avenge herself, and yet must perforce smile. At all costs to herself, even by the endurance of the most stinging epigrams, she wished to discover the girl's motives of action, so she pretended not to have understood.

"The Chouans have never had a leader so cruel as this one, if we are to believe the rumors that are flying about concerning him," she said, speaking at the same time to Francine and Francine's mistress.

"Oh! I do not believe he is cruel," Mlle. de Verneuil answered, "but he can lie, and to me he seems exceedingly credulous; the leader of a party ought to be the dupe of no one."

"Do you know him?" asked the Emigrant coolly.

"No," she answered, with a contemptuous glance at him, "but I thought I knew him."

"Oh, mademoiselle, he is a shrewd one, and no mistake!" said the captain, shaking his head and giving to the word he used (*malin*) by an eloquent gesture the peculiar shade of meaning which it then possessed, and has since lost. "These old families sometimes send out vigorous offshoots. They come over here from a country where the *ci-devants*, so they say, have by no means an easy time of it; and men are like medlars, you know—they ripen best on straw. If the fellow has a head on his shoulders, he can lead us a dance for a long while yet. He thoroughly understood how to oppose his irregular troops to our free companies, and so paralyze the efforts of the Government. For every Royalist village that is burned he burns two for the Republicans. He has spread his operations over a vast tract of country, and in that way he compels us to bring a considerable number of troops into the field, and that at a time when we have none to spare! Oh, he understands his business!"

"He is murdering his own country," said Gérard, interrupting the captain with his powerful voice.

"But if his death is to deliver the country," said the young gentleman, "shoot him down, and be quick about it."

Then he tried to fathom Mlle. de Verneuil's mind with a glance; and of the dramatic vivacity of the mute scene that passed between them, and its subtle swiftness, words can give but a very imperfect idea. Danger makes people interesting. The vilest criminal excites some measure of

pity when it comes to be a question of his death. So Mlle. de Verneuil, being by this time quite certain that the lover who had scorned her was the formidable rebel leader, did not seek to reassure herself on this head by keeping him on the rack; she had a quite different curiosity to satisfy. She preferred to trust or to doubt him, as her passion dictated, and set herself to play with edged tools. She indicated the soldiers to the young chieftain in a glance full of treacherous derision; dangling the idea of his danger before him, amusing herself with making him painfully aware that his life hung on a word which her lips seemed to be opening to pronounce. She seemed, like an American Indian, to be ready to detect the movement of any nerve in the face of an enemy bound to the stake, flourishing her tomahawk with a certain grace; enjoying a revenge unstained by crime, dealing out to him his punishment like a mistress who has not ceased to love.

"If I had a son like yours, madame," she said to the visibly terrified stranger, "I should put on mourning for him on the day when I sent him forth into danger."

She received no reply. Again and again she turned her head toward the two officers, and then looked sharply at Mme. du Gua; but she could not detect that there was any secret signal passing between the lady and the Gars, such as could assure her of an intimacy which she suspected, and yet wished not to credit. A woman likes so much to maintain the suspense of a life-and-death struggle when a word from her will decide the issue. The young general bore the torture which Mlle. de Verneuil inflicted upon him without flinching, and with smiling serenity; the expression of his face and his bearing altogether showed that he was a man utterly unaffected by the perils he underwent, and now and then he seemed to tell her, "Here is your opportunity for avenging your wounded vanity! Seize upon it! I should be in despair if I had to resign the feeling of contempt which I have for you."

Mlle. de Verneuil began to scrutinize the chief from her

position of vantage, with a haughty insolence, which was quite superficial, for at the bottom of her heart she was admiring his tranquil courage. Glad as she was to make the discovery of the ancient name that her lover bore (for all women love the privileges which a title confers), she was still further delighted to confront him in his present position. He was the champion of a cause ennobled by its misfortunes; he was exerting every faculty of a powerful character in a struggle with a Republic that had been so many a time victorious. She saw him now, face to face with imminent danger, displaying the dauntless valor that has such a powerful effect on women's hearts. Over and over again she put him through the ordeal, perhaps in obedience to an instinct which leads womankind to play with a victim, as a cat plays with the mouse that she has caught.

"What law is your authority for putting Chouans to death?" she asked of Captain Merle.

"The law of the fourteenth of last Fructidor. The revolted departments are put outside the civil jurisdiction, and courts-martial are established instead," replied the Republican.

"To what cause do I owe the honor of your scrutiny of me?" she inquired of the young chief, who was watching her attentively.

"To a feeling which a gentleman hardly knows how to express in speaking to a woman, whatever she may be," said the Marquis of Montauran in a low voice, as he leaned over toward her; then he went on aloud, "We must needs live in such times as these, to see girls in your station do the office of the executioner, and improve upon him in their deft way of playing with the axe—"

Her eyes were set in a stare on Montauran; then in her exultation at receiving this insult from a man whose life lay between her hands as he spoke, she whispered in his ear with gentle malice as she laughed—"Your head is so wrong that the executioners will none of it. I shall keep it for my own."

The bewildered marquis in his turn gazed at this unaccountable girl for a moment. The love in her had prevailed over everything else, even over the most scathing insults, and her revenge had taken the form of pardoning an offence which women never forgive. The expression of his eyes grew less cold and hard, a touch of melancholy stole over his features. His passion had a stronger hold upon him than he had recognized. These faint tokens of the reconciliation she looked for satisfied Mlle. de Verneuil. She looked tenderly at the chief; the smile she gave him seemed a caress; then she lay back in the coach, unwilling to endanger the future in the drama of her happiness, and in full belief that that smile of hers had once more tightened the knot that bound them. She was so beautiful! She knew so well how to clear away all obstacles in love's course! She was so thoroughly accustomed to take all things as a pastime, to live as chance determined! She had such a love of the unforeseen and of the storms of life!

Very soon, in obedience to orders from the marquis, the coach left the highroad and turned off toward the Vivetière, along a cross-road in a hollow shut in on either side by high banks, planted with apple trees, which made their way seem more of a ditch than a road, properly speaking. The travellers gradually left the Blues behind them, as they reached the manor house; its gray roofs appearing and vanishing alternately through the trees along the way. Several soldiers were left behind, engaged in extricating their shoes from the stiff clay. "This is like the road to Paradise with a vengeance," cried Beau-Pied.

Thanks to the postilion, who had been there before, it was not very long before Mlle. de Verneuil came in sight of the chateau of the Vivetière. The house lay on the slope of a sort of promontory between two deep ponds which almost surrounded it, so that it was only possible to reach the mansion by following one narrow causeway. That part of the peninsula on which the house and gardens stood was protected at some distance from the back of the chateau by

a wide moat which received all the overflow from the two ponds with which it communicated. In this way an island was formed, which was an almost impregnable retreat, and therefore invaluable for a party leader, who could only be surprised here by treachery.

As the gate creaked on its rusty hinges, and she passed under the pointed archway that had been ruined in the previous war, Mlle. de Verneuil stretched out her head. The gloomy colors of the picture presented to her gaze all but effaced the thoughts of love and coquetry with which she had been soothing herself. The coach entered a great courtyard, almost square in shape, and bounded by the steep banks of the ponds. These rough embankments were kept dank by the water with its great patches of green weed, and bore such trees as love marshy places for their sole adornment. They stood leafless now. The stunted trunks and huge heads gray with lichens rose above the reeds and undergrowth like misshapen dwarfs. These uncomely hedges seemed to have a sort of life in them, and to find a language when the frogs escaped from them, croaking as they went; and the water-hens, in alarm at the sounds made by the coach, flew and splashed across the surface of the pools. The courtyard, surrounded by tall withered grasses, gorse, dwarf shrubs and creeping plants, put an end to any preconceived ideas of order or of splendor.

The chateau itself seemed to have been a long while deserted. The roofs appeared to bend under an accumulation of vegetable growths; and although the walls were built very solidly of the schistous stone of the district, there were numerous cracks where the ivy had found a hold. The chateau fronted the pond, and consisted of two wings which met at right angles in a high tower, and that was all. The doors and shutters hung loose and rotten; the balustrades were eaten with rust; and these, like the crazy windows, looked as if the first breath of a storm would bring them down. A shrewd wind whistled through the ruinous place, and in the uncertain moonlight the great

house had a spectral appearance and character. The cold grays and blues of the granitic stone, combined with the tawny brown and black of the schist, must have been actually seen, before the accuracy of the image called up at first sight by this dark empty carcass of a house can be appreciated. It looked exactly like a skeleton with the fissures in its masonry, its unglazed windows, the embrasures in the battlements of the tower seen against the sky, and the roofs that let the light through; the birds of prey that flew shrieking about it added one more feature to the vague resemblance. A few lofty fir-trees behind the house showed their dark waving foliage above the roofs, and some yew-trees that had once been trimmed as a sort of ornament to the corners now made for it a setting of dismal festoons like palls at a funeral.

The shape of the doorways, the clumsiness of the ornaments, the want of symmetry in the construction, and everything, in fact, about the mansion, showed that it was one of those feudal manor-houses of which Brittany is proud; not without reason it may be, for in this Celtic land they form monuments to the nebulous history of a time when as yet the monarchy was not established. In Mlle. de Verneuil's imagination the word "chateau" always called up a conventional type, so that she was greatly struck with the funeral aspect of the picture before her. She sprang lightly from the coach, and stood by herself looking about her in dismay, and meditating on the part that she ought to play.

Francine heard Mme. du Gua give a sigh of joy when she found herself free of the escort of Blues; and an involuntary exclamation broke from her when the gate was shut, and she found herself within this kind of natural fortress. Montauran had hurried eagerly to Mlle. de Verneuil; he guessed the nature of the thoughts that filled her mind.

"This chateau," he said, with a shade of melancholy in his voice, "was ruined in the war, just as the plans which I projected for our happiness have been ruined by you."

"And in what way?" she inquired in utter astonishment.

"Are you, a *beautiful young woman*, *witty*, and *nobly born?*" he said in caustic tones, repeating for her the words which she had spoken so coquettishly during their conversation by the way.

"Who has told you otherwise?"

"Friends of mine, worthy of credence, who are deeply interested in my safety, and are on the watch to baffle treachery."

"Treachery!" said she, with a satirical look. "Are Alençon and Hulot so far away already? You have a poor memory, a perilous defect in the leader of a party! But if friends begin to exert so powerful a sway over your heart," she went on with matchless insolence, "pray keep your friends. There is nothing which can be compared with the pleasures of friendship. Farewell! for neither I nor the soldiers of the Republic will enter here!"

She darted toward the gateway in her wounded pride and scorn, but there was a dignity and a desperation about her flight that wrought a change in the ideas of the marquis concerning her. He could not but be imprudent and credulous, for he could only forego his desires at too great a cost to himself. He also was already in love, so that neither of the lovers had any wish to protract their quarrel.

"Only a word, and I believe you," he said, with entreaty in his voice.

"A word?" she answered in an ironical tone, "not so much as a gesture," and her lips were tightly strained together.

"Scold me at any rate," he entreated, trying to take the hand which she withdrew, "if, indeed, you dare to pout with a rebel chieftain, who is now as sullen and suspicious as he was formerly light-hearted and confiding."

There was no anger in Marie's look, so the marquis went on, "You have my secret, and I have not yours."

A darker shade seemed to cross her alabaster brow at the words. Marie looked angrily at the chief and replied, "My secret? Never!"

Every word, every glance, has at the moment its own eloquence, in love; but Mlle. de Verneuil's words had conveyed no definite meaning, and for Montauran, clever as he might be, the significance of her exclamation remained undecipherable. And yet her woman's voice had betrayed an emotion by no means ordinary, which was still in evidence to excite his curiosity.

"You have a pleasant way of dispelling suspicions," he began.

"So you still harbor them?" she inquired, and her eyes scanned him curiously as if to say, "Have you any rights over me?"

"Mademoiselle," said the young man, who looked at once submissive and resolute, "the authority you exercise over the Republican troops, and this escort—"

"Ah, that reminds me? Are we, my escort and I (your protectors as a matter of fact), in security here?" she asked with a trace of irony.

"Yes, on my faith as a gentleman! Whoever you may be, you and yours have nothing to fear in my house."

The impulse that prompted this pledge was evidently so generous and so stanch that Mlle. de Verneuil could not but feel absolutely at rest as to the fate of the Republicans. She was about to speak, when Mme. du Gua's presence imposed silence upon her. Mme. du Gua had either overheard the conversation of the two lovers, or she had partly guessed at it, and it was in consequence no ordinary anxiety that she felt when she saw them in a position which no longer implied the slightest unfriendliness. At sight of her, the Marquis offered his hand to Mlle. de Verneuil, and went quickly toward the house, as if to rid himself of an intrusive companion.

"I am in the way," said the stranger lady to herself, without moving from the place where she stood. She watched the two reconciled lovers, moving slowly now, on their way to the entrance flight of steps, where they came to a stand that they might talk, so soon as they had put a distance between themselves and her.

"Yes, yes, I am in their way!" she went on, speaking to herself; "but in a little while the creature yonder will not be in *my* way any longer; the pond, *pardieu!* shall be her grave. I shall not violate your 'faith as a gentleman.' Once under that water, what is there to fear? Will she not be safe, down below there?"

She was staring at the calm mirror-like surface of the little lake to the right of the courtyard, when she heard a rustling sound among the briars on the embankment, and by the light of the moon she saw Marche-a-Terre's face rise up above the knotty trunk of an old willow-tree. One had to know the Chouan well to make him out among the confusion of pollard trunks, for one of which he might readily be taken. First of all, Mme. du Gua looked suspiciously round about her. She saw the postilion leading the horses round into a stable, situated in that wing of the chateau which fronted the bank where Marche-a-Terre was hiding; she watched Francine go toward the two lovers, who had forgotten everything else on earth just then; and she came forward with a finger on her lips to enjoin absolute silence, so that the Chouan rather understood than heard the words that followed next, "How many are there of you here?"

"Eighty-seven."

"*They* are only sixty-five, for I counted them."

"Good," the savage answered with cruel satisfaction. Heedful of Francine's slightest movement, the Chouan vanished into the hollow willow trunk, as he saw her return to keep a lookout for the woman whom her instinct told her to watch as an enemy.

Seven or eight people appeared at the top of the steps, brought out by the sounds of the arrival of the coach.

"It is the Gars!" they exclaimed. "It is he; here he is!"

Others came running up at their exclamations, and the talk between the two lovers was interrupted by their presence. The Marquis of Montauran made a rush toward these gentlemen, called for silence with an imperative gesture, and made them look at the top of the avenue through which the

Republican soldiers were defiling. At the sight of the familiar blue uniform turned up with red, and the gleaming bayonets, the astonished conspirators exclaimed—"Can you have come back to betray us?"

"I should not warn you of the peril if I had," said the marquis, smiling bitterly. "Those Blues," he went on after a pause, "are this young lady's escort. Her generosity rescued us, by a miracle, from a danger which all but overwhelmed us in an inn in Alençon. We will give you the history of the adventure. Mademoiselle and her escort are here on my parole, and must be welcomed as friends."

Mme. du Gua and Francine having come as far as the flight of steps, the marquis gallantly presented his hand to Mlle. de Verneuil, the group of gentlemen fell back into two rows in order to let them pass, and every one tried to discern the features of the new-comer; for Mme. du Gua had already stimulated their curiosity by making several furtive signs to them.

In the first room Mlle. de Verneuil saw a large table handsomely furnished and set for a score of guests. The dining-room opened into a vast saloon, where the company were very soon assembled together. Both apartments were in keeping with the appearance of dilapidation about the exterior of the chateau. The wainscot was of polished walnut, ill carved with poor and rough designs in bold relief; but it was split by great cracks, and seemed ready to fall to pieces. The dark color of the wood seemed to make the mirrorless and curtainless rooms more dismal yet; and the antiquated and crazy furniture matched the ruinous aspect of everything else. Marie noticed maps and plans lying out unrolled upon a great table, and a stack of weapons and rifles in a corner of the room. Everything spoke of an important conference among the Vendean and Chouan chiefs. The marquis led Mlle. de Verneuil to an enormous worm-eaten armchair which stood beside the hearth, and Francine took up her position behind her mistress, leaning upon the back of the venerable piece of furniture.

"You will give me leave to do my duty as host for a moment?" said the marquis, as he left the two new-comers to mingle with the groups his guests had formed.

Francine saw how, at a word or two from Montauran, the chiefs hastily concealed their weapons and maps and anything else which could arouse the suspicions of the Republican officers. One or two of the chiefs divested themselves of wide leather belts, furnished with hunting-knives and pistols. The marquis recommended the greatest discretion, and left the room, apologizing for the absence necessary to provide for the reception of the inconvenient guests which chance had thrust upon him. Mlle. de Verneuil, who was trying to warm her feet at the fire, had allowed Montauran to leave her, without turning her head; and thus disappointed the expectations of the onlookers, who all were anxious to see her face. Francine was the sole witness of the change wrought among those assembled by the young chief's departure. The gentlemen gathered round the stranger lady, and during the murmured conversation which was carried on among them, there was no one present who did not look again and again at the two strangers.

"You know Montauran!" she said. "He fell in love with this girl at first sight, and you can easily understand that the soundest advice was suspicious to him when it came from my mouth. Our friends in Paris, and Messieurs de Valois and d'Esgrignon at Alençon, one and all warned him of the trap they want to set for him, by flinging some hussy at his head, and he is bewitched with the first one he comes across; a girl who, if all I can learn about her is correct, has taken a noble name, only to tarnish it, who—" and so on, and so on.

This lady, in whom the woman that decided the attack on the turgotine can be recognized, will keep throughout this story the name which enabled her to escape in the perils of her journey through Alençon. The publication of her real name could only displease a noble family, who have suffered deeply already from the errors of this young person,

whose fortunes have, moreover, been taken for the subject of another drama.

Very soon the attitude of the company changed, and simple curiosity grew to be impertinent, and almost hostile. Two or three rather harsh epithets reached Francine's ears, who spoke a word to her mistress, and took refuge in the embrasure of a window. Marie rose, and turned her glances filled with dignity, and even with scorn, upon the insolent group. Her beauty, and her pride and the refinement of her manner, worked a sudden change in the attitude of her enemies, and called forth an involuntary flattering murmur from them. Two or three men among them, whose exterior polish and habits of gallantry revealed that they had been acquired in the lofty spheres of courts, came up to Marie in a free and easy manner; her modest reserve compelled their respect, none of them dared to address a word to her, and, so far from being accused by them, it was she who seemed to sit in judgment upon them.

The chiefs in this war undertaken for God and the King bore very little resemblance to the fancy portraits which she had been pleased to draw of them. The real grandeur of the struggle was diminished for her; it shrank into mean dimensions when she saw (two or three energetic faces excepted) the country gentlemen about her, every one of them entirely devoid of character and vigor. Marie came down all at once from poetry to prose. At first sight these faces seemed to manifest a craving for intrigue rather than a love of glory; it was really self-interest that had set each man's hand to his sword; so if they grew heroic figures in the field, here they appeared as they actually were. The loss of her illusions made Mlle. de Verneuil unjust, and prevented her from recognizing the real devotion that distinguished several of these men. But most of them, for all that, were of a commonplace turn. If a few faces among them were marked out by a character of their own, it was spoiled by a certain pettiness due to aristocratic etiquette and convention. So if Marie's generosity allowed them to be astute and shrewd, she

found no trace among them of the simpler and larger way of looking at things, which the men and the successes of the Republic had always led her to expect.

This nocturnal confabulation in the old ruined stronghold, beneath the quaintly-carved beams that were no ill match for the faces below, made her smile; she was inclined to see it all as a typical presentment of the monarchy. Then she thought with delight that at any rate the marquis took the first place among these men, whose sole merit in her eyes lay in their devotion to a lost cause. She drew the outlines of her lover's face upon that background of figures, and pleased herself with the way in which he stood out against it; all these meagre and thin personalities were but tools in his hands, wherewith to carry out his own noble purposes.

Just then the returning footsteps of the marquis sounded from the next room; the conspirators broke up into knots at once, and there was an end to the whisperings. They looked like schoolboys who have been up to some mischief in their master's absence, hurriedly restoring an appearance of order and silence. Montauran came in. The happiness of admiring him, of seeing him take the first place among these folk, the youngest and handsomest man among them, fell to Marie. He went from group to group, like a king among his courtiers, distributing slight nods, handshakes, glances, and words that indicated a good understanding or a tinge of reproach; playing his part as a partisan leader with a grace and self possession which could hardly have been looked for in a young man whom she had set down at first as a feather-brain. The presence of the marquis had put a stop to their inquisitive demonstrations with regard to Mlle. de Verneuil, but Mme. du Gua's spitefulness soon showed its effects. The Baron du Guénic, nicknamed *l'Intimé*, who, among all these men thus brought together by weighty considerations, seemed best entitled by his name and rank to speak on familiar terms with Montauran, laid a hand on his arm, and drew him into a corner.

"Listen, my dear marquis," he said; "we are all sorry to see you about to commit a flagrant piece of folly."

"What do you mean by that remark?"

"Who can tell where this girl comes from, what she really is, and what her designs upon you may be?"

"Between ourselves, my dear l'Intimé, my fancy will have passed off by to-morrow morning."

"Just so; but how if the gypsy betrays you before the morning—?"

"I will answer you that when you tell me why she has not already done so," answered Montauran jestingly, assuming an air of exceeding self-complacency.

"If she has taken a liking to you, she would have no mind perhaps to betray you till her 'fancy' too had 'passed off.' . . ."

"Just take a look at that charming girl, my dear fellow; notice her manners, and dare to tell me that she is not a woman of good birth! If she sent a favorable glance in your direction, would you not feel, in the depths of you, some sort of respect for her? A certain lady has prejudiced you against her, but after what we have just said to each other, if she was one of those abandoned women that our friends have spoken about, I would kill her."

"You do not suppose that Fouché would be fool enough to pick up a girl from a street corner to send after you?" Mme. du Gua broke in. "He has sent some one likely to attract a man of your calibre. But if you are blind, your friends will have their eyes open to watch over you."

"Madame," answered the Gars, darting angry glances at her, "take care to make no attempt against this person or her escort, or nothing shall save you from my vengeance. It is my wish that mademoiselle should be treated with the greatest respect, and as a woman who is under my protection. We are connected, I believe, with the family of Verneuil."

The opposition which the marquis encountered produced the effects that hindrances of this sort usually cause in young

people. Lightly as he apparently held Mlle. de Verneuil when he gave the impression that his infatuation for her was only a whim, his feeling of personal pride had forced him to take a considerable step. By openly acknowledging her, it became a question of his own honor to make others respect her, so he went from group to group assuring every one that the stranger really was Mlle. de Verneuil, with the air of a man whom it would be dangerous to contradict; and all the murmurs were silenced.

As soon as harmony was in some sort re-established in the salon, and his duties as host detained him no longer, Montauran went eagerly up to his mistress, and said in a low voice, "Those people yonder have robbed me of a moment of happiness."

"I am very glad to have you beside me," she answered, smiling. "I give you fair warning; I am inquisitive, so do not grow tired of my questions too soon. First of all, tell me who that worthy person is in the green waistcoat."

"He is the celebrated Major Brigaut from the Marais, a comrade of the late Mercier's, otherwise called La Vendée."

"And who is the stout churchman with the florid countenance, with whom he is now discussing me?" went on Mlle. de Verneuil.

"Do you want to know what they are saying about you?"

"Do I want to know? . . . Can you doubt it?"

"But I could not tell you without insulting you."

"The moment that you allow me to be insulted without wreaking vengeance for any affront put upon me in your house, I bid you farewell, marquis. Not a moment longer will I stay. I have felt some pangs of conscience already at deceiving those poor trusting and trusty Republicans." She took several paces, but the marquis went after her.

"My dear Marie, hear me. Upon my honor, I have silenced their scandalous talk before I know whether it is false or true. But our friends among the ministers in Paris have sent warning to me to mistrust every sort of woman that

comes in my way; telling me that Fouché has made up his mind to make use of some Judith out of the streets against me; and in my situation, it is very natural that my best friends should think that you are too handsome to be an honest woman—"

The marquis looked straight into the depths of Mlle. de Verneuil's eyes; her color rose, she could not keep back the tears.

"Oh, I have deserved these insults," she cried. "I would fain see you convinced that I am a despicable creature, and yet know myself beloved—then I should doubt you no longer. I believed in you when you deceived me, but you have no belief in me when I am sincere. There, that is enough, sir!" she said, knitting her brows, and growing white, like a woman about to die. "Farewell." She fled into the dining-room with a desperate impulse.

"Marie, my life is yours," said the young marquis in her ear. She stopped and looked at him.

"No, no," she said; "I will be generous. Farewell. When I followed you hither, I was mad; I was thinking neither of my own past nor of your future."

"What! you leave me at the moment when I lay my life at your feet—"

"It is offered in a moment of passion, of desire—"

"It is offered without regret and forever," said he. She came back again, and to hide his emotion the marquis resumed their conversation—

"That stout man whose name you asked for is a formidable person. He is the Abbé Gudin, one of those Jesuits who are obstinate enough, or, it may be, devoted enough, to stop in France in the teeth of the edict of 1763, which drove them into exile. He is the firebrand of war in these parts, and a propagandist of the religious confraternity named after the Sacred Heart. He makes use of religion as a means toward his ends, so he persuades his proselytes that they will come to life again, and he understands how to sustain their fanaticism by dexterously contrived prophecy. You see how

it is: one must seek to gain over every one through his private interests, in order to reach a great end. That is the whole secret of policy."

"And that muscular person in a vigorous old age, with such a repulsive face? There, look! the man who is wearing a ragged lawyer's gown."

"Lawyer! He aspires to the title of *maréchal de camp*. Have you never heard them speak of Longuy?"

"Is that he?" said Mlle. de Verneuil, startled. "And you make use of such men as he?"

"Hush! he might overhear you. Do you see that other man in unhallowed converse with Mme. du Gua?"

"The man in black who looks like a judge?"

"He is one of our diplomatists, La Billardière, the son of a counsellor in the Parliament of Brittany; his name is Flamet, or something like it; but he is in the confidence of the princes."

"Then there is his neighbor, who is clutching his white clay pipe at this moment, and leaning the fingers of his right hand against the panel of the wainscot, like a boor?" said Mlle. de Verneuil, laughing.

"Pardieu! your guess about him is correct. He was formerly gamekeeper to that lady's husband, now deceased. He is in command of one of the companies, which I am opposing to the mobile battalions. He and Marche-a-Terre are perhaps the most scrupulously loyal servants that the King has hereabout."

"But who is she?"

"She was Charette's last mistress," the marquis replied. "She has a great influence over everybody here."

"Has she remained faithful to his memory?" All the answer vouchsafed by the marquis was a dubious kind of compression of the lips.

"Have you a good opinion of her?"

"Really; you are very inquisitive!"

"She is my enemy because she can be my rival no longer," said Mlle. de Verneuil, laughing "I forgive her

her past errors, so let her forgive mine. Who is that officer with the mustaches?"

"Permit me to leave his name unmentioned. He is determined to rid us of the First Consul by attacking him sword in hand. Whether he succeeds or no, you will hear of him; he will become famous."

"And you are come hither to command such men as these?" she said, aghast, "and these are the King's champions? Where are the great lords and the gentlemen?"

"Why, they are scattered throughout every court in Europe!" said the marquis scornfully. "Who but they are enlisting kings with their armies and their cabinets in the service of the House of Bourbon, to hurl them all upon this Republic, which is threatening monarchy and social order everywhere with utter destruction!"

"Ah!" she answered him, stirred by an enthusiastic impulse, "from this time forward be for me the pure source whence I shall draw all the rest of the ideas that I must learn; I am willing that it should be so. But leave me the thought that you are the one noble who does his duty in attacking France with Frenchmen and not with foreign auxiliaries. I am a woman, and I feel that if my own child were to strike me in anger, I could forgive him; but if he could see me torn in pieces by a stranger, I should consider him a monster."

"You will always be a Republican!" said the marquis, overcome by a delightful intoxication; the strong feeling in her tones had strengthened his confident hopes.

"A Republican? No; I am that no longer. I should not respect you if you were to make your submission to the First Consul," she replied. "But neither should I be willing to see you at the head of the men who are plundering a corner of France, when they should be attacking the Republic in form. For whom are you fighting? What do you look for from a king restored to the throne by your hands? A woman once before achieved this glorious master-stroke, and the king whom she delivered let them burn her alive.

Such as he are the anointed of the Lord, and it is perilous to touch hallowed things. Leave it to God alone to set them up, to take them down, or to replace them on their dais among the purple. If you have weighed the reward that will be meted out to you, then in my eyes you are ten times greater than I have ever thought you. If that is so, trample me beneath your feet if you will; I would give you leave to do so, and be glad!"

"You are enchanting! But do not try to urge your doctrine on these gentlemen, or I shall be left without soldiers."

"Ah! if you would let me convert you, we would go a thousand leagues away from here."

"These men, whom you appear to despise, will know how to die in the struggle," said the marquis in a more serious tone; "and all their faults will be forgotten then. Besides, if my efforts are crowned with any success, will not the laurels of victory hide everything?"

"You are the only one present who has anything to lose, as far as I can see."

"I am not the only one," he replied with real humility. "There are those two Vendean chiefs over there. The first one, whom you have heard spoken of as the Grande-Jacques, is the Comte de Fontaine, and the other La Billardière, whom I have already pointed out to you."

"Do you forget Quiberon, where La Billardière played a very strange part," she answered, struck by a sudden thought of the past.

"La Billardière has undertaken heavy responsibilities, believe me. Those who serve the princes do not lie upon roses."

"You make me shudder!" cried Marie; then she went on in a tone which indicated that she was keeping in the background some mystery that concerned him personally. "A single moment is enough for the destruction of an illusion, and to reveal secrets on which the lives and happiness of many men depend." She paused as if she were afraid of

having said too much, and added, "I should like to know that the soldiers of the Republic are in safety."

"I will be very careful," he said, smiling to conceal his agitation; "but say no more about your soldiers, I have answered for them to you on the faith of a gentleman."

"And, after all, what right had I to dictate to you?" she resumed. "You are to be the master always when it lies between us two. Did I not tell you that I should be in despair to reign over a slave?"

"My lord marquis," said Major Brigaut respectfully, interrupting the conversation, "will the Blues remain here for some time?"

"They will go on again as soon as they are rested," Marie cried.

The marquis sent searching glances round the company, observed the excitement among them, went from Mlle. de Verneuil, and left Mme. du Gua to take his place at her side. The young chief's sarcastic smile did not disturb the treacherous mask of good humor upon her features. Just as she came, Francine uttered a cry which she herself promptly stifled. Mlle. de Verneuil beheld with astonishment her faithful country-girl dash into the dining-room. She looked at Mme. du Gua, and her surprise increased when she saw the pallor that overspread the face of her enemy. Curious to learn the reason of this hasty flight, she turned toward the embrasure of the window, followed thither by her rival, who wished to lull any suspicions which an indiscretion might have awakened, and who smiled upon her with indescribable spitefulness as they returned together to the hearth after both had glanced over the landscape and the lake. Marie had seen nothing which justified Francine's departure, and Mme. du Gua was satisfied that she was being obeyed.

The lake, from the brink of which Marche-a-Terre had appeared in the courtyard when the lady called him forth, went to join the moat that surrounded and protected the gardens, forming winding stretches of water with mist above

it, sometimes as wide as a lake, sometimes as narrow as the ornamental streams contrived in parks. The steep sloping banks, past which the clear water was rippling, ran but a few fathoms distant from the windows. Francine had been engaged in musing on the black outlines of several old willow stumps against the surface of the water, and in noticing with indifferent eyes the uniform curve that a light breeze was giving to the willow branches. Suddenly, she thought she saw one of these shapes moving, on the mirror of the water, in the spontaneous and uneven fashion by which some living thing is revealed. The shape, howsoever dim it was, seemed to be that of a man.

At first Francine gave the credit of her vision to the broken outlines produced by the moonlight falling through the leaves; but very soon a second head appeared, and yet others showed themselves in the distance. The low shrubs along the bank swayed violently up and down, till Francine saw along the whole length of hedge a gradual motion like that of a huge Indian serpent of fabulous proportions. Here and there among the tufts of broom and the brambles points of light gleamed and danced. Redoubling her attention, Marche-a-Terre's sweetheart thought that she recognized the first of the black forms that moved along the quivering growth on the bank. However vague the outlines of the man, the beating of her heart convinced her that in him she saw Marche-a-Terre.

A gesture made it clear to her. Impatient to learn if some treachery or other were not lurking behind this mysterious proceeding, she rushed in the direction of the court. When she came into the middle of the green space, she looked from the two wings of the house to the banks on either side, without discerning any trace whatever of a furtive movement on the side which faced the inhabited wing. A faint rustling sound reached her; as she lent an attentive ear to it, it sounded like a noise made by some wild creature in the silence of the forests; she shuddered, but she did not tremble. Young and innocent as she yet was, her curiosity

swiftly prompted a stratagem. She saw the coach, and ran to crouch within it; only raising her head, with all the caution of a hare that has the sound of the far-off hunt ringing in her ears. She saw Pille-Miche come out of the stable. There were two peasants with the Chouan, and all three were carrying trusses of straw. These they spread out so as to form a long sort of shake-down in front of the inhabited pile of buildings that ran parallel with the embankment where the stunted trees were growing. The Chouans were still marching there with a noiselessness which revealed the fact that some horrible plot was being prepared.

"You are giving them straw as if they really were to sleep there. That's enough! Pille-Miche, that's enough!" muttered a hoarse voice which Francine recognized.

"And aren't they going to sleep there?" retorted Pille-Miche, with a stupid horse-laugh. "But are you not afraid that the Gars will be angry?" he went on in a voice so low that Francine caught nothing of it.

"Oh, well, he will be angry," Marche-a-Terre replied, in rather louder tones; "but all the same we shall have killed the Blues. There is a carriage here," he went on; "we must put that away."

Pille-Miche drew the coach by the pole, and Marche-a-Terre gave such a vigorous push to one of the wheels that Francine found herself inside the barn, and just about to be locked up in it, before she could think over her situation. Pille-Miche went to help to fetch the hogshead of cider which was to be served out to the soldiers of the escort by the orders of the Marquis. Marche-a-Terre walked the length of the coach on his way out to shut the door, when he felt a hand that stopped him by a clutch at the long hair of his goatskin. He recognized the eyes whose sweetness exercised a power over him like magnetism, and stood still for a moment as if spellbound. Francine sprang hastily out of the coach, and spoke in the aggressive tone that is so wonderfully becoming to a woman in vexation—"Pierre, what news did you bring, as we came, to that lady and her son?

What are they doing here? Why are you hiding yourself? I want to know everything!"

Her words brought an expression into the Chouan's face which Francine had never yet known there. The Breton drew his innocent mistress to the threshold of the door; he turned her so that the white rays of the moonlight fell upon her, and made his answer, gazing at her the while with terrible eyes—"Yes, by my damnation! Francine, I will tell you, but only when you have sworn to me on this rosary" —and he drew out a worn string of beads from under his goatskin—"swear upon this relic that you know," he went on, "to answer me truly one single question."

Francine blushed as she looked at the rosary; some lover's keepsake between them doubtless.

"It was on this," the Chouan went on, shaken with emotion, "that you swore—"

He did not finish, for the peasant-girl laid her hand on the lips of her wild lover to enjoin silence upon him.

"Is there any need for me to swear?" asked she.

He took his mistress gently by the hand, looked at her for a moment, and went on, "Is the young lady whom you serve really Mlle. de Verneuil?"

Francine stood motionless with her arms at her sides, with bowed head and drooping eyelids, pale and confused.

"She is a baggage!" Marche-a-Terre went on in a terrible voice.

The pretty hand tried once more to cover his lips at that word, but this time he recoiled from her in fury. The little Breton maid no longer saw her lover before her, but a wild beast in all his natural ferocity. His brows were drawn into a heavy scowl; his lips curled back in a snarl that showed his teeth; he looked like a dog defending his master.

"I left you a flower, and I find you garbage! Ah! why did I leave you? You are come here to betray us, to deliver up the Gars!"

These phrases were roared rather than articulated. Terrified as Francine was, she dared to look this savage in the

face at this last reproach, raised her eyes like an angel's to his, and answered quietly—"That is false; I will stake my salvation on it. These are some of your lady's notions."

He lowered his head in his turn. She took his hand, came close to him caressingly, and said, "Pierre, why are we going on like this? Listen, I do not know if you yourself understand something of all this, for I can make nothing of it. But remember that this beautiful and noble young lady is my benefactress, and yours too—we live together almost like sisters. No harm of any sort ought to come to her so long as we are with her—not while we are both alive, at any rate. So swear to me that this shall be so, for you are the only person here whom I can trust."

"I am not the master here," the Chouan replied in a sullen tone. His face grew dark. She took his great hanging ears and gently twisted them as if she were caressing a cat.

"Well, then, promise me to use all the power you have to insure the safety of our benefactress," she continued, seeing that he relented somewhat. He shook his head as if dubious of his success, a gesture that made the Breton girl shudder. The escort arrived on the causeway at this critical moment. The tramp of the men, and the clanking of their weapons, woke the echoes of the courtyard, and apparently put an end to Marche-a-Terre's hesitation.

"Perhaps I shall succeed in saving her," said he to his mistress, "if you can keep her in the house. And whatever may happen," he added, "stay there with her and keep the most absolute secrecy. Without that I will engage for nothing."

"I promise," she answered in her terror.

"Very well; go in. In with you at once! And let no one see that you are frightened—not even your mistress."

"Yes."

The Chouan looked at her in a fatherly way. She pressed his hand and fled with the swiftness of a bird toward the flight of steps; while he slipped into the hedge he had left,

like an actor who rushes to the wings as the curtain rises on a tragedy.

"Do you know, Merle, this place looks to me like a regular mouse-trap," said Gérard, as they reached the chateau.

"Yes, I see that perfectly well," the captain answered thoughtfully. Both officers hastened to post sentinels so as to secure the causeway and the gate; then they cast suspicious glances over the embankments and the lay of the land about them.

"Pshaw!" said Merle; "we must either frankly trust ourselves in these barracks, or keep out of them altogether."

"Let us go in," answered Gérard.

Released from duty by a word from their commander, the soldiers quickly stacked their guns in conical piles, and pitched their colors in front of the litter of straw, with the cask of cider standing in the centre of it. They broke up into groups, and a couple of peasants began to serve out rye-bread and butter to them. The Marquis came forward and took the two officers into the salon. As Gérard reached the top of the flight of steps, he took a look at the two wings of the house where the aged larches were spreading their black branches, and called Beau-Pied and Clef-des-Cœurs to him.

"Both of you go and reconnoitre the gardens and search the hedges. Do you understand? And then post a sentinel in front of your line of defence."

"May we light a fire before we set out on our prowl, adjutant?" said Clef-des-Cœurs.

Gérard nodded.

"You see it for yourself, Clef-des-Cœurs," said Beau-Pied; "the adjutant made a mistake in poking himself into this hornet's nest. If Hulot had been commanding us, he would never have run us into this corner; it is as if we were in the bottom of a pot here."

"What an ass you are!" exclaimed Clef-des-Cœurs. "You, the king of sharp fellows, can't guess that this sentry-box of a chateau belongs to the amiable individual for whom our gay Merle, the most accomplished of captains,

is tuning his pipe. He is going to marry her, that is as easy to see as a well-polished bayonet; and such a woman as that will be a credit to the demi-brigade."

"True," answered Beau-Pied, "and you might add that there is good cider here, but I can't drink it with any relish in front of those beastly hedges. I seem to see Larose and Vieux-Chapeau coming to grief in the ditch up yonder on La Pèlerine. I shall never forget poor old Larose's queue as long as I live; it bobbed up and down, like a knocker on a front door."

"Beau-Pied, my friend, you have too much imagination for a soldier. You ought to make poetry at the National Institute."

"If I have too much imagination," Beau-Pied answered, "you yourself have hardly any. It will be a good while before you come to be consul."

The laughter of the troop put an end to the dispute, as Clef-des-Cœurs found no answering shaft for his adversary in his quiver.

"Are you ready to make your round? I myself am going to take to the right," said Beau-Pied.

"All right; I will take the left," his comrade answered. "But hold on a moment! I want to drink a glass of cider; my throat is all glued together like the sticking-plaster that covered Hulot's best hat."

Unluckily, the perilous embankment, where Francine had seen the men moving, lay on the left-hand side of the gardens, which Clef-des-Cœurs was neglecting to beat up at once. War is altogether a game of chance.

As Gérard entered the salon and saluted the company, he gave a searching look round at the men of whom it was composed. His suspicions recurred to his mind in greater force. He went suddenly up to Mlle. de Verneuil and spoke to her in a low voice, "I think you ought to make a retreat at once; we are not safe here."

"Can you fear anything in my house?" she asked, laughing. "You are safer here than you would be in Mayenne."

A woman always answers unhesitatingly for her lover. The two officers were less uneasy; and just then, in spite of some unimportant remarks about an absent guest whose consequence was sufficient to keep them waiting for him, the company went into the dining-room. Thanks to the usual silence which prevails at the beginning of a meal, Mlle. de Verneuil could pay some attention to this meeting, so strange under the present circumstances. She herself had in a manner been the cause of it. It had come about through the ignorance which women who treat everything according to their own caprice are wont to bring to the most critical actions in life. One fact suddenly struck her with surprise. The two Republican officers towered above the others by the impressive character of their features. Their long hair was drawn away from the temples and gathered at the nape of the neck into a huge plaited tail, leaving the outlines of their foreheads clearly defined in a way that gives an appearance of sincerity and dignity to a young face. Their threadbare blue uniforms, with the worn red facings, their epaulets flung behind their shoulders in many a march (plainly showing a lack of greatcoats throughout the army, even among the officers themselves); everything about them, in fact, brought out the strong contrast between these two military men and the others who surrounded them.

"Ah," she said to herself, "this is the Nation; this is Liberty!" Then she glanced round the Royalists—"and *there* is the one man, a King and Privilege!" she said.

She could not help admiring Merle's face; the gallant soldier so completely resembled the typical French trooper, who can whistle an air as the bullets fall thick about him, and who cannot forego a gibe at a comrade who meets with an awkward accident. Gérard was impressive. In his sternness and self-possession he seemed to be one of those Republicans from conviction, who were to be met with in such numbers at this time in the French armies—an element of noble unobtrusive devotion that lent to them an energy never known before.

"There is another of these men with a large outlook," said Mlle. de Verneuil to herself. "They are the masters of the present on which they take their stand; they are shattering the past, but it is for the benefit of the future."

The thought made her melancholy, because it had no bearing upon her lover. She turned toward him, that a different feeling of admiration might make reparation for her tribute to that Republic which she already began to hate. She saw the Marquis surrounded by men fanatical and daring enough, and sufficiently keen speculators to attack a triumphant Republic in the hope of reinstating a dead monarchy, a proscribed religion, princes errant, and defunct privileges. "His scope of action," she thought, "is no less than that of the other; he is groping among the ruins of a past out of which he seeks to make a future."

Her imagination, fancy-fed, hesitated between the new and the old ruins. Her conscience clamored in her that the one was fighting for a man and the other for a country; but by means of sentiment she had arrived at the point which is reached by the way of reason, when it is recognized that the King is the same thing as the country.

The Marquis heard the sound of a man's footsteps in the salon, and rose to go to meet him. He recognized the belated guest who tried to speak to him, in surprise at his company; but the Gars hid from the Republicans a sign by which he desired the stranger to take his place at the banquet and to keep silence. When the two Republican officers examined the features of their hosts, the suspicions at first entertained by them awoke afresh. Their prudence was aroused at the sight of the Abbé Gudin's ecclesiastical vestments and the outlandish costumes of the Chouans. Their heed redoubled; they discovered amusing contrasts between the talk and the manners of the guests. If some of them showed symptoms of ultra-Republicanism, the bearing of certain others was just as pronouncedly aristocratic. Certain glances exchanged between the Marquis and his guests, which they detected, certain ambiguous words incautiously dropped; and more

than either of these things, the round beards which adorned the throats of several guests who unsuccessfully tried to conceal them by their cravats, apprised the officers of the truth, which struck them both at the same moment.

They communicated the same thought to each other by the same glance, for Mme. du Gua had cleverly separated them, and they had to fall back upon the language of the eyes. The situation required that they should act adroitly. They did not know whether they were the masters of the chateau, or whether they had been snared in a trap; they had no idea whether Mlle. de Verneuil was a dupe or an accomplice in this inexplicable affair; but an unforeseen occurrence hurried matters to a crisis before they could fully recognize its gravity.

The newly-arrived guest was one of those men, squarely built in every way, with a high-colored complexion, who fling their shoulders back as they walk, who seem to make a flutter in the atmosphere round about them, and to be of the opinion that every one needs must take more than one look at them. In spite of his noble birth, he had taken life as a joke which must be made the best of; and though he had a devout veneration for himself, he was good-natured, well-mannered, and witty, after the manner of those gentlemen who, having finished their education at court, have retired to their estates; whereon, even after the lapse of twenty years, they will never believe that they have grown rusty. Men of this description say and do the wrong thing with assured self-possession; they talk rubbish in a lively way, show no little skill in fighting shy of good fortune, and take incredible pains to run their heads into nooses. He made up for lost time by plying his knife and fork in a way which showed him to be a stout trencherman, and then gave a look round at the company. At the sight of the two officers his surprise was redoubled; he directed a questioning look at Mme. du Gua, who only replied by indicating Mlle. de Verneuil. When he set eyes on the siren whose beauty was beginning to lay to rest the thoughts which Mme. du Gua

had at first aroused in the minds of the guests, one of those insolent and derisive smiles that seem to convey a whole scandalous chronicle broke over the countenance of the stout stranger. He bent and whispered to his neighbor two or three words that remained a mystery for Marie and the officers, as they travelled from ear to ear and from mouth to mouth, till they reached the heart of him into whom they must strike death.

The Vendean and Chouan chiefs turned their scrutiny upon the Marquis of Montauran with merciless curiosity. Mme. du Gua's eyes were radiant with joy as they travelled from the Marquis to the astonished Mlle. de Verneuil. The anxious officers seemed to consult each other as they awaited the upshot of this extraordinary scene. Then in a moment the knives and forks in all hands ceased to move, silence prevailed in the place, and all eyes were concentrated upon the Gars. A terrific burst of fury had turned the flushed and passionate face to the hue of wax. The young chief turned toward the guest who had set this squib in motion, and said in a deep smothered voice: "*Death of my soul!* Count, is that true?" he demanded.

"On my honor," the count answered, bowing gravely. The Marquis lowered his eyes for one moment; but he raised them immediately to turn them once more upon Marie. She was watching this struggle closely, and received that deadly glance.

"I would give my life," he muttered, "to have my revenge at this moment."

Mme. du Gua understood these words from the mere movement of his lips, and smiled at the young man, as one smiles at a friend who is about to be delivered from his despair. The general scorn depicted upon all faces for Mlle. de Verneuil raised the indignation of the two Republicans to the highest pitch. They rose abruptly.

"What do you desire, citizens?" asked Mme. du Gua.

"Our swords, citoyenne!" Gérard replied, ironically.

"You do not require them at table," said the Marquis coolly.

"No, but we are going to play at a game that you understand," said Gérard as he reappeared. "We shall see each other a little closer here than we did at La Pèlerine."

The company remained struck dumb. The courtyard rang at that moment with a volley, fired all at once and in a way that sounded terribly in the ears of the two officers. They both rushed to the flight of steps, and saw about a hundred Chouans taking aim at the few soldiers who had survived the first round of firing, and shooting them down like hares. These Bretons were coming up from the bank where Marche-a-Terre had stationed them at the risk of their lives; for during these manœuvres, and after the last shots were fired, a sound was heard through the cries of dying men. Several Chouans had dropped like stones into the depths of the water which eddied round about them. Pille-Miche took aim at Gérard; Marche-a-Terre covered Merle.

"Captain," the Marquis said coolly, repeating to Merle the words that the Republican had spoken about him, "you see that *men are like medlars; they ripen on straw.*" He waved his hand to show the captain the whole escort of Blues lying on the blood-drenched litter, where the Chouans were despatching the living and stripping the dead with incredible rapidity. "I was quite right when I told you that your men would never reach La Pèlerine," added the Marquis, "and I think that your skull will be filled with lead before mine is. What do you say?"

Montauran felt a hideous craving to slake his anger. His own taunts of the vanquished, the cold-blooded cruelty, the very treachery of this military execution, carried out without his orders, but to which he now gave his countenance, satisfied the inmost wishes of his heart. In his wrath he would fain have destroyed all France. The mangled Blues and their surviving officers, all of them guiltless of the crime for which he demanded vengeance, were in his hands like so many cards, which the gambler gnaws to pieces in his despair.

"I would rather perish in the same way than gloat over

it as you do," said Gérard. He looked at the naked blood-stained corpses of his men. "Murdered!" he cried, "and after this cowardly fashion!"

"Like Louis XVI., sir!" the Marquis retorted sharply.

"There are mysteries in the trial of a King which you, sir, will never comprehend," said Gérard haughtily.

"Bring a King to trial!" cried the Marquis, now beside himself.

"Wage war against France!" said Gérard contemptuously.

"Preposterous folly!" said the Marquis.

"Parricide!" the Republican retorted.

"Regicide!"

"What, are you going to pick a quarrel in the last minute of your life?" cried Merle gayly.

"True," said Gérard coldly. Then turning to the marquis, "Sir," he said, "if you mean to put us to death, at least do us the favor to shoot us at once."

"Just like you!" the captain put in; "always in a hurry to be done with a thing. But when one sets out on a long journey, my friend, and there is to be no breakfast the next morning, one has supper first."

Proudly, and without a word, Gérard sprang toward the wall; Pille-Miche levelled his musket at him, and glanced at the impassive Marquis. He construed the silence of his chief as a command, and the adjutant-major fell like a tree. Marche-a-Terre rushed up to share this fresh spoil with Pille-Miche, and they wrangled and croaked above the yet warm corpse like two famished ravens.

"If you like to finish your supper, captain, you are at liberty to come with me," said the Marquis, who wished to keep Merle for an exchange of prisoners. The captain went back with the Marquis mechanically, murmuring in a low voice as if he were reproaching himself, "It is that she-devil of a light-of-love who is at the bottom of all this— What will Hulot say?"

"Light-of-love!" exclaimed the Marquis in a smothered voice; "then there is no doubt about what she really is!"

The captain had apparently dealt a deathblow to Montauran, who followed him pale, haggard, exhausted, and with tottering steps. Another scene had been enacted in the dining-room, which in the absence of the Marquis had taken so menacing a turn that Marie, who found herself deprived of her protector, could read her death-warrant written of a certainty in her rival's eyes. At the sound of the volley every one except Mme. du Gua had risen from the table. "Take your seats again," said she; "it is nothing. Our people are killing the Blues."

When she saw that the Marquis was well out of the room, she rose. "Mademoiselle, here," she said, with the calmness of suppressed rage, "came to carry off the Gars from us. She came here to try to give him up to the Republic."

"I could have given him up a score of times since this morning," replied Mlle. de Verneuil, "and I have saved his life."

Mme. du Gua sprang at her rival with lightning swiftness. In a transport of blind fury, she rent the feeble loops of twisted braid that fastened the spencer of the girl (who stood aghast at this unlooked-for assault), and with violent hands broke into the sanctuary where the letter lay concealed, tearing her way through the material, the embroideries, corset, and shift. Then she took advantage of this search to assuage her personal jealousy, and managed to lacerate her rival's throbbing breast with such dexterity and fury that her nails left their traces in the blood that they had drawn, feeling the while a horrid pleasure in subjecting her victim to this detestable outrage. In the faint resistance which Marie offered to this furious woman, her unfastened hood fell back; her hair, released from restraint, shook itself free in waving curls; modesty had set her whole face aflame; two burning tears fell, that left their gleaming traces on her cheeks and made the fire in her eyes glow brighter; she stood quivering at the indignity, shuddering under the eyes of those assembled. Even harsh judges would have believed in her innocence when they saw what she suffered.

Hatred is so clumsy a calculator that Mme. du Gua did not perceive that no one gave any heed whatever to her when she cried triumphantly, "Look here, gentlemen; have I traduced this frightful creature now?"

"Not so very frightful," said the stout guest, who had brought about this disaster. "I have a prodigious liking for frights of this description."

"Here is an order," said the merciless Vendean lady, "signed by Laplace, and countersigned by Dubois." Several raised their heads at the two names. "And this is the gist of it," Mme. du Gua continued—

"*Military citizen-commandants of every rank, local administrators, procureur-syndics, and so forth, in the revolted departments, and especially those situated in the localities frequented by the ci-devant Marquis de Montauran, chief of the bandits, and nicknamed the Gars, are to give every help and assistance to the citoyenne Marie Verneuil, and to act in accordance with the orders which she may give them, each one, in everything that concerns him*, and so on, and so on."

"Here is an Opera girl taking an illustrious name to soil it with this infamy," she added.

There was an evident stir of surprise among those assembled.

"The contest is not on equal terms if the Republic is going to employ such pretty women against us!" said the Baron du Guénic gayly.

"And women, moreover, who have nothing to lose," returned Mme. du Gua.

"Nothing?" said the Chevalier du Vissard; "Mademoiselle has endowments which must bring her in a pretty large income!"

"The Republic must be of a very frivolous turn to send us women of pleasure as envoys," cried the Abbé Gudin.

"But, unfortunately, Mademoiselle seeks those pleasures which kill," said Mme. du Gua, with a hideous glee in her expression, which meant that the end to this jesting was approaching.

"How is it then that you are living still, madame?" said Marie, rising to her feet after repairing the disorder in her dress. The cutting epigram silenced the company, and compelled their respect for so proud a victim. Mme. du Gua noticed a smile stealing over the lips of the chiefs; the irony in it infuriated her; she neither saw the entrance of the Marquis nor of the captain, who followed him.

"Pille-Miche," she called to the Chouan, as she pointed out Mlle. de Verneuil, "here is my share of the spoil; I make her over to you; do whatever you will with her."

A shudder ran through the whole roomful at the words "whatever you will," in that woman's mouth; for behind the Marquis there appeared the hideous heads of Marche-a-Terre and Pille-Miche, and her fate was evident in all its horror.

Francine stood as if thunderstruck, with clasped hands and eyes brimming with tears. Mlle. de Verneuil, who recovered all her self-possession in the face of danger, cast a look of scorn round the assembly, snatched her letter back from Mme. du Gua, and held up her head; her eyes were dry, but there was lightning in them as she hastened toward the door, where Merle's sword was standing. There she came upon the Marquis, who stood apathetic and motionless as a statue. There was no trace of pity for her in his face; every feature was rigid and immovable. Cut to the heart, her life grew hateful to her. This man then, who had professed so much love for her, had listened to the taunts that had been heaped upon her; had stood there, a frozen-hearted spectator of the outrage she had just suffered when the beauties that a woman reserves for love had been subjected to the general gaze. Perhaps she might have forgiven Montauran for the scorn with which he regarded her, but it made her indignant that he should have seen her in an ignominious position. The dazed look she turned upon him was full of hate, for she felt a dreadful craving for revenge awaking within her. She saw death now close upon her, and felt oppressed by her own powerlessness.

Something surged up in her head like an eddying tide of madness. For her, with the boiling blood in her veins, the whole world seemed wrapped in flames. Instead of killing herself, therefore, she snatched up the sword, brandished it above the Marquis, and drove it at him up to the hilt; but as the blade had slipped between his side and his arm, the Gars caught Marie by the wrist and dragged her from the room, aided by Pille-Miche, who had flung himself upon the frenzied girl just as she tried to kill the Marquis. At the sight of all this, Francine shrieked.

"Pierre! Pierre! Pierre!" she cried in piteous tones, following her mistress as she walked.

The Marquis left the stupefied assembly and went out, shutting the door of the room behind him. He was still holding the girl's wrist tightly in a convulsive clutch when he reached the flight of steps; and though Pille-Miche's nervous hands were almost crushing the bone of her arm, she was conscious of nothing but the burning fingers of the young chief, at whom she gazed with her cold eyes.

"You are hurting me, sir!" The Marquis looked at his mistress for an instant, and this was all the answer that he made.

"Have you something to avenge as foully as that woman has done?" said she. Then she shivered as she saw the corpses stretched out upon the litter, and she cried, "The faith of a gentleman. . . . Ha! ha! ha!" Her laughter was fearful to hear. "A glorious day!" she added.

"Yes," he echoed, "a glorious day, and without a morrow."

He dropped Mlle. de Verneuil's hand when he had given one long, last look at the magnificent creature whom he found it all but impossible to renounce. Neither of these two highly-wrought spirits would give way. Perhaps the Marquis was waiting for a tear, but the girl's eyes were dry and proud. He turned away abruptly, and left Pille-Miche his victim.

"God will hear me, Marquis; I shall pray to Him to give you a glorious day without a morrow!"

Pille-Miche, rather at a loss with so splendid a prey, drew her along with a mixture of respect and mockery in his gentleness. The Marquis heaved a sigh, and returned to the dining-room, turning upon his guests a face like that of a corpse with the eyes as yet unclosed.

Captain Merle's presence was inexplicable for every actor in this tragedy; every one looked at him questioningly and in surprise. Merle perceived their astonishment, and, smiling sadly, he spoke, still in character, to the Chouans.

"I do not believe, gentlemen, that you can refuse a glass of wine to a man who is about to go the last stage of his journey."

It was just as the assemblage had been restored to equanimity by these words, uttered with a Gallic light-heartedness which was bound to find favor with Vendeans, that Montauran reappeared; his white face and the fixed look in his eyes struck a chill through every guest.

"You shall see," said the captain, "that dead men will set the living going!"

"Ah!" said the Marquis, with the involuntary start of a man who wakes from sleep; "there you are, my dear Council-of-War!" He reached for a bottle of vin de Grave as if to fill the other's glass.

"Thanks, citizen-marquis; but, you see, it might go to my head."

At this witticism, Mme. du Gua spoke smilingly to the guests.

"Come," she said; "let us spare him the dessert."

"You are very cruel, madame, in your vengeance," the captain answered. "You forget that murdered friend of mine, who is waiting for me; and I always keep my appointments."

"Captain," said the Marquis, "you are at liberty! Stay," and he threw his glove toward him; "here is your passport. The Chasseurs du Roi know that they must not kill all the game at once."

"Life!" said Merle, "very well, so be it then; but you

are making a blunder. You shall be closely pressed, I will engage for it, and I shall give you no quarter. You may be very clever, but you are not worth as much as Gérard. Still, although your head will never make up to me for his, have it I must and will."

"He was in such a great hurry!" retorted the Marquis.

"Good-by. Perhaps I could drink with my own executioners, but I cannot stay here with my friend's murderers," said the captain, and he vanished, leaving the guests to their amazement.

"Now, then, gentlemen, what have you to say about the sheriffs, apothecaries, and attorneys who rule the Republic?" asked the Marquis coolly.

"God's death, Marquis!" replied the Comte de Bauvan; "they are very ill-bred, at all events. That fellow has affronted us, it seems to me."

There had been a secret motive for the captain's prompt retreat. This girl, who had met with such scorn and humiliation, and who perhaps succumbed at that very moment, had, during the past scene, shown him beauties so difficult to forget that as he went out he said to himself, "If she does belong to that class, she is no ordinary girl at any rate, and she shall assuredly be my wife—"

He despaired so little of rescuing her from the clutches of these savages, that his first thought had been how he would take her under his protection in the future, having saved her life. Unfortunately, when the captain reached the flight of steps, he found the courtyard deserted. He looked about him and gave ear to the silence, but heard nothing except the noisy far-off laughter of the Chouans as they drank and divided the booty in the gardens. He ventured to turn the corner of the fatal wing of the building, where his men had been shot down; and by the feeble light of one or two candles he distinguished, from his angle, the Chasseurs du Roi broken up into different groups. Neither Pille-Miche, nor Marche-a-Terre, nor the girl herself was there; but he suddenly felt a pull at the skirt of his

uniform, and turning round, he saw Francine on her knees.

"Where is she?" he asked.

"I do not know. . . . Pierre drove me away, and ordered me not to stir."

"Which way did they go?"

"That way," she answered, pointing to the causeway. Then, in the moonlight, the captain and Francine discerned certain shadows falling on the waters of the lake; the slender feminine form that they both recognized, indistinct as it was, made their hearts beat.

"Oh, it is she!" said the Breton maid. Mlle. de Verneuil was apparently standing there resignedly, with several figures about her whose actions indicated a discussion.

"There are several of them!" the captain exclaimed. "It is all one; come along."

"You will lose your life to no purpose," said Francine.

"I have lost it once already to-day," he answered gayly. Both of them made their way toward the gloomy gateway, on the other side of which this scene was taking place. But Francine stopped half-way.

"No," she called softly; "I will go no further! Pierre told me not to meddle. I know him. We shall spoil everything. Do anything you please, *Monsieur l' Officier*, but keep away. If Pierre were to see you with me, he would kill you."

Pille-Miche appeared without the gate; he called to the postilion who had kept in the stable, saw the captain, and shouted as he levelled his musket at him, "Saint Anne of Auray! The *recteur* at Antrain was quite right when he told us that the Blues had signed a contract with the devil. Stop a bit; I will show you how to come to life again!"

"Hollo, there! My life has been granted to me," shouted Merle, seeing himself threatened.

"Here is your chief's glove!"

"Yes," answered the Chouan, "just like a ghost, that! I, on the other hand, do not grant you your life. . . . *Ave*

Maria!" and he fired. The shot penetrated the captain's head, he dropped; and as Francine came up to him she distinctly heard Merle uttering these words, "I would rather stop here with them than go back without them."

The Chouan rushed upon the Blue to strip the body with the remark, "There is one good thing about these men who come back, their clothes come to life again along with them"; but when he saw in the captain's hand the glove of the Gars that had been held up for him, he stood in dismay at sight of that sacred token. "I would not be in the skin of my mother's son!" he exclaimed, and he vanished with the swiftness of a bird.

In order to understand this unexpected meeting, so fatal for the captain, it is necessary to follow the fortunes of Mlle. de Verneuil after the Marquis, overcome with his rage and despair, had gone away and abandoned her to Pille-Miche. Then Francine had seized Marche-a-Terre's arm in a spasm of fear, and with her eyes full of tears had reminded him of the promise he had made to her. At the distance of a few paces Pille-Miche was dragging off his victim, much as he might have trailed some awkward burden after him. Marie, with loosened hair and bowed head, turned her eyes upon the lake, but she was held back by an iron grip, and compelled to follow the Chouan with lagging steps; now and again he turned to give her a look or to hasten her progress, and each time he did so a jovial thought was expressed on his face by a frightful smile.

"Isn't she grand! . . ." he cried with uncouth emphasis. Francine, hearing these words, recovered her power of speech.

"Pierre!"

"Well?"

"Is he going to kill mademoiselle?"

"Not just at once," answered Marche-a-Terre.

"But she will resist; and if she dies, I shall die too!"

"Ah, well; you are too fond of her; . . so let her die!" said Marche-a-Terre.

"If we two are rich and happy, we owe our good fortune to her; but, anyhow, have you not promised me to save her from all misfortune?"

"I will try; but stop there, and don't stir away."

Marche-a-Terre's arm was instantly released, and Francine, consumed by the most terrible anxiety, waited in the courtyard. Marche-a-Terre came up with his companion just as the latter had entered the barn and forced his victim to get into the coach. Pille-Miche demanded his fellow's aid to pull the coach out.

"What do you want with all this?" inquired Marche-a-Terre.

"Well, the Grande-Garce has given me the woman, so all she has belongs to me."

"As for the coach, well and good, you will make some money out of it; but how about the woman? She will fly at your face like a cat!"

Pille-Miche burst into a noisy laugh, and replied, "*Quien*, I shall take her home along with me, and I shall tie her up."

"All right; let us put the horses in," said Marche-a-Terre.

A moment later Marche-a-Terre, who had left his companion to keep watch over his victim, brought the carriage out upon the causeway outside the gate. Pille-Miche got in beside Mlle. de Verneuil, without noticing the start she made to fling herself into the water.

"Hollo! Pille-Miche!" shouted Marche-a-Terre.

"What is it?"

"I will buy your share of the plunder of you."

"Are you joking?" asked the Chouan, pulling his prisoner by the skirt as a butcher might seize a calf that was escaping him.

"Let me have a look at her, and I'll make you an offer."

The unhappy girl was obliged to descend, and to stand there between the two Chouans, who each held one of her hands in his grasp, and gazed at her as the two elders must have stared at the bathing Susannah. Marche-a-Terre heaved a sigh.

"Will you take thirty good livres a year?"

"Do you really mean it?"

"Do you take it?" asked Marche-a-Terre, stretching out his hand.

"Oh, it is a bargain, for I can have Breton girls with that, and grand ones too! But how about the carriage; who is to have that?" said Pille-Miche, bethinking himself.

"That is mine!" cried Marche-a-Terre, with a ring in his terrible voice which indicated a kind of ascendency over all his companions due to the savagery of his nature.

"But suppose there should be money in the carriage?"

"Haven't you struck a bargain?"

"Yes; I closed with you."

"All right; go and look up the postilion, who is fixed up in the stable."

"But if there was any gold in it—"

"Is there any in there?" Marche-a-Terre asked sharply of Marie, while he shook her by the arm.

"I have a hundred crowns," replied Mlle. de Verneuil. At these words the two Chouans looked at each other.

"Well, my good friend, do not let us fall out about a Republican girl," said Pille-Miche in Marche-a-Terre's ear; "shall we chuck her into the pond with a stone round her neck, and divide the hundred crowns between us?"

"I will give you the hundred crowns out of my share of d'Orgemont's ransom!" cried Marche-a-Terre, suppressing the groan occasioned by this sacrifice.

Pille-Miche gave a hoarse kind of cry, and went to find the postilion. His glee brought bad luck to the captain whom he met. When he heard the report of the gun, Marche-a-Terre hurried to the spot, where Francine, still in terror, was praying with clasped hands upon her knees beside the poor captain, so vivid had been the effect upon her of the spectacle of the murder.

"Run to your mistress," said the Chouan shortly; "she is safe." He himself ran in search of the postilion, and returned with the speed of lightning. As he passed by Merle's

body for the second time, he saw the glove of the Gars, which the dead hand was still clutching convulsively.

"Oh, ho!" cried he: "Pille-Miche has tried foul play here! It is not so sure that he will live to draw that income of his—"

He tore away the glove, and said to Mlle. de Verneuil, who was already in her place in the coach with Francine beside her, "Here; take this glove. If you are attacked on the road say, 'Oh! the Gars!' and show this passport here, and no harm can come to you. Francine," he said, turning toward her and seizing her hand, "we are quits now with the woman there; the devil take her; come with me."

"Would you have me leave her just now, at this moment!" Francine answered in a melancholy voice. Marche-a-Terre first scratched his ear and then his forehead. Then he raised his head and showed his eyes, with the fierce expression that made them formidable.

"You are right," said he. "For a week I will leave you with her; but when once it is over, if you do not come to me—" He did not finish the sentence, but he struck the muzzle of his rifle a heavy blow with the flat of his hand, made a feint of levelling it at his mistress, and went without waiting for a response.

As soon as the Chouan had gone, a stifled voice that seemed to rise from the surface of the pond cried, "Madame! . . . Madame! . . ."

The postilion and the two women shuddered with horror, for several dead bodies had drifted thither. A Blue hiding behind a tree showed himself. "Let me get up on your box, or I am a dead man! That damned glass of cider that Clef-des-Cœurs would drink has cost more than a pint of blood! If he had followed my example, and made his rounds, our poor comrades would not be floating about there, like a fleet."

While these events were taking place without the house, the chiefs sent by the Vendeans were conferring with the Chouans, glass in hand, while the Marquis of Montauran

presided. Ample potations of Bordeaux wine gave warmth to the debate, which grew momentous and serious as the banquet drew to a close. During the dessert, when the lines of concerted military action had been laid down, and the Royalists drank to the health of the Bourbons, the report of Pille-Miche's gun sounded like an echo of the ill-omened war which these gay and noble conspirators were fain to wage against the Republic. Mme. du Gua shook with the pleasurable agitation which she felt at being rid of her rival, and at this the guests all looked at one another, and the Marquis rose from the table and went out.

"After all, he was in love with her," said Mme. du Gua satirically; "go and keep him company, M. de Fontaine; he will grow as tiresome as the flies if he gets into the blues."

She went to the window which looked out upon the courtyard, to try to see Marie's dead body. Thence, by the last light of the setting moon, she could make out the coach which was ascending the avenue between the apple trees with incredible speed. Mlle. de Verneuil's veil was fluttering in the breeze out of the coach-window. Mme. du Gua left the company, enraged at what she saw.

The Marquis was lounging on the flight of steps, deep in gloomy thoughts, as he watched about a hundred and fifty Chouans who had returned from the gardens, whither they had gone to divide their booty, and who were now about to finish the cider and the bread which had been promised to the Blues. These soldiers (new pattern) upon whom the hopes of the Monarchy were founded were drinking together in little knots: while seven or eight of their number were amusing themselves on the embankment opposite to the flight of steps, by tying stones to the bodies of the Blues and flinging them into the water. This spectacle, taken in connection with the various pictures presented by the eccentric costumes and the wild faces of the callous and uncivilized *gars*, was so extraordinary and so novel to M. de Fontaine (who had observed a certain appearance of seemliness

and discipline among the Vendean troops), that he seized this opportunity to say to the Marquis of Montauran, "What can you hope to do with such brutes as that?"

"No great things, you mean, my dear Count!" replied the Gars.

"Will they ever be able to execute manœuvres when they are confronted with the Republicans?"

"Never."

"Will they ever be able to do so much as to understand your orders and carry them out?"

"Never."

"Then what use will they be to you?"

"They will enable me to plunge my sword into the heart of the Republic," thundered the Marquis; "to make Fougères mine in three days, and the length and breadth of Brittany in ten! . . . Come, sir," he continued in a milder voice, "set out for la Vendée; let Autichamp, Suzannet, and the Abbé Bernier only go ahead as quickly as I shall; let them not open negotiations with the First Consul (as they once led me to fear)"—here he gave the Vendean's hand a mighty grasp—"and we shall be within thirty leagues of Paris in three weeks."

"But the Republic is sending sixty thousand men and General Brune against us!"

"Sixty thousand men! Really?" cried the Marquis, with a satirical smile. "And with what men will Bonaparte carry on his Italian campaign? And as for General Brune, he will not come either. Bonaparte has despatched him against the English in Holland, and General Hédouville, the friend of our friend Barras, will take his place out here. Now do you understand me?"

When he heard him talk in this way, M. de Fontaine looked at the Marquis with an astute and arch expression which seemed to convey a reproach to the speaker for not fully understanding the drift of the mysterious words which he had just uttered. Both gentlemen understood each other perfectly well from that moment, yet the young chief replied

with an indefinable smile to the unspoken thought in the eyes of both.

"M. de Fontaine, do you know my arms? My device is —'*Persévérer jusqu'à la mort.*'"

The Comte de Fontaine grasped Montauran's hand and pressed it as he said, "I was left for dead on the field at Quatre-Chemins, so you will have no misgivings about me; but believe my experience—times are changed."

"Oh! yes," said La Billardière, who joined them. "You are young, Marquis. Just listen to me. Your estates have not all been sold—"

"Ah! can you imagine devotion without a sacrifice!" said Montauran.

"Do you really know the King?" said La Billardière.

"Yes."

"Then I admire you."

"The King," said the young chief, "is the Priest, and I am fighting for the faith."

And so they separated. The Vendean, convinced of the necessity of a resignation to the course of events, and of keeping his faith in his own heart; La Billardière to go back to England again; and Montauran to fight desperately, and to force the Vendeans to co-operate with him by means of the victories of which he dreamed.

These events had stirred up so many emotions in the soul of Mlle. de Verneuil that she lay back in the carriage utterly prostrated and as if dead, when she had given the order to proceed to Fougères. Francine was silent, following the example of her mistress. The postilion, who was in terror of some fresh misadventure, made haste to reach the high-road, and very soon reached the top of La Pèlerine.

In the dense, white morning mists, Marie de Verneuil made her way across the wide and beautiful valley of the Couësnon, where this story began. From the summit of La Pèlerine she could hardly see the schistous rock upon which the town of Fougères is built, and from which the three travellers were still some two leagues distant. Mlle. de

Verneuil felt chilled through with the cold, and thought of the poor infantryman perched up behind the carriage, insisting in spite of his refusals that he should come in and sit beside Francine. The sight of Fougères drew her for a moment from her revery. Moreover, as the guard stationed at the St. Leonard gate refused admittance into the town to strangers, she was compelled to produce her credentials. Then she found herself protected at last from all hostile attempts as she came into this place, with its own townspeople for its sole defenders at the moment. The postilion could find no better sheltering roof for her than at the Post inn.

"Madame," said the Blue whom she had rescued, "if you should ever require to administer a sabre cut to any individual, my life is at your service. I am good at that. My name is Jean Falcon; I am called Beau-Pied; and I am a sergeant in the first company of Hulot's lads in the seventy-second demi-brigade, which they call the Mayençaise. Excuse my vanity and presumption; but I can do no more than offer you the life of a sergeant, because for the time being I have nothing else to put at your disposal." He turned on his heel and went away whistling.

"The lower one looks in the ranks of society," said Marie with bitterness, "the more one finds generosity of feeling without any parade of it. A marquis gives me up to death in return for life, while a sergeant . . . But there, let that be!"

When the beautiful Parisian lay in a well-warmed bed, her faithful Francine hung about, waiting in vain for the affectionate word that she was accustomed to hear; but her mistress saw her still standing there uneasily, and said with every mark of sadness—"They call this a day, Francine, but I am ten years older for it."

The next morning, as she was getting up, Corentin presented himself to call upon Marie, who gave him admittance.

"Francine," she remarked, "my misfortune must be great indeed when I can tolerate the sight of Corentin."

But for all that, when she saw him again, she instinctively

felt for the thousandth time toward the man a repugnance that an acquaintance of two years' standing had mitigated no whit.

"Well," said he, smiling; "I thought you were going to succeed. Was it not he then whom you got hold of?"

"Corentin," she answered slowly, with a sorrowful expression, "do not mention that affair to me unless I myself speak to you of it."

He walked to and fro in the room, attempting to divine the secret thoughts of this strange girl, in whose glance there was a something which at times had power enough to disconcert the cleverest men.

"I foresaw this check," he began, after a moment's pause. "I have been making inquiries, in case you might care to make this town your headquarters. We are in the very heart and centre of Chouannerie. Will you stay here?" The nod vouchsafed to him by way of a reply gave rise to conjectures as to yesterday's events on Corentin's part, which were partially correct. "I have taken a house for you," he went on; "one confiscated by the Nation, and as yet unsold. They are not very advanced in their notions hereabout. Nobody has dared to buy the place, because the emigrant to whom it belonged is thought to be an awkward customer. It is close to St. Leonard's church, and, upon my honor, one enjoys a charming view from the windows. Something can be made of the hole; it is habitable; will you go into it?"

"Yes, at once," she exclaimed.

"But you must let me have a few hours in which to get it cleaned and set to rights, so that you may find everything to your mind."

"What does it matter?" she said. "I should make no difficulty about living in a convent or in a jail. However, you can arrange things so that I can be left to rest in absolute solitude this evening. There, you can leave me! Your presence is intolerable. I wish to be left alone with Francine. I am on better terms with her perhaps than with myself. . . . There, good-by; go away!"

It was evident from the words thus volubly uttered, and

imbued by turns with coquetry, wilfulness, and passion, that her serenity was completely restored. Slumber no doubt had gradually dispelled the impressions of the previous day, and reflection had brought her counsels of revenge. If dark thoughts at times were depicted upon her face, they seemed to bear witness to the power possessed by some women of burying their most enthusiastic feelings in the depths of their souls, and of that capacity for dissimulation which enables them to smile graciously while they scheme out the ruin of their victim.

She sat alone, absorbed in plans for getting the Marquis into her hands alive. For the first time she had known a life in accordance with her inmost wishes; but of that life nothing remained to her now but the longing for revenge—a revenge that should be absolute and unending. This was her sole thought, her one passionate desire. Francine's words and little services drew no response from Marie, who seemed to be sleeping with her eyes open; the live-long day went by, and there was no outward sign or movement of the life which is the expression of our thoughts. She lay reclined on a kind of ottoman which she had made with chairs and pillows, and not till evening came did she languidly let fall these words and no more, with her eyes upon Francine —"Yesterday, my child, I saw clearly how one can live for love's sole sake; to-day I have come to understand how one can die to have revenge. Yes! I would give my life to find him out, wherever he may be, to come across him once more, to entangle him, and to have him in my power. . . . But if, after a few days, I do not find this man who has slighted me lying humble and submissive at my feet; if I do not reduce him to an abject servitude, why, then, I shall be beneath contempt, and I shall be no more a woman—I shall be no longer myself!"

The house which Corentin had proposed to Mlle. de Verneuil was well adapted to gratify her innate love of refinement and luxury in her surroundings. He himself appeared to have accumulated there everything which in his opinion

ought to please her, with a lover's eagerness, or, more properly speaking, with the anxious servility of a man in power seeking to attach to his own interest some inferior who is necessary to him. He came to Mlle. de Verneuil the next day to suggest a removal to this improvised dwelling-place. She scarcely did more than transfer herself from her rickety ottoman to a venerable sofa which Corentin had managed to find for her; but the fanciful Parisian entered into residence as if the house had belonged to her. She treated everything she saw with supreme indifference, and developed a sudden affinity with the oddments, which by degrees she appropriated to her own use, as if they had long been familiar to her. These are trifling details, but not without significance in the portraiture of an unusual character. She might have become well acquainted with this dwelling in her dreams or ever she saw the place; and here she lived upon the hatred within her, just as she would have existed upon love.

"At any rate," she said to herself, "I have not inspired in him that insulting kind of pity which is death; I do not owe my life to him. Oh, my first and last and only love! What an outcome of it all!"

She made a spring at the startled Francine. "Do you love too? Oh, yes! I remember, you are in love! How very fortunate I am to have a woman beside me who can understand! Well, my poor Francine, do not men seem to you to be horrible creatures? Why, he told me that he loved me! And he could not stand the slightest test . . . Yet if the whole world had spurned him, he should have found a refuge in my heart; if the whole universe had been against him, I would have stood by him. Once, I used to watch a world filled with beings who came and went; they were only indifferent things for me, but that world of mine was only melancholy, not dreadful; and now, what is it all without him? He will go on living though I am not there at his side, though I do not speak to him nor touch him, nor hold him and clasp him close. . . . Oh, rather than that, I will murder him myself as he sleeps!"

Francine looked at her in alarm for a moment without speaking; then she said in a gentle voice, "Murder the man that you love?"

"Ah! surely, when he loves you no longer." But after these fearful words, she hid her face in her hands, sank into her chair, and was mute.

The next day some one broke suddenly into her room without being announced. It was Hulot; his face was hard and stern, and Corentin came with him. She raised her eyes and trembled.

"You are come to require an account of your friends from me?" she said. "They are dead."

"I know it," answered Hulot. "They did not die in the service of the Republic."

"For me, and it was my doing. . . . You are about to speak to me of our country! Will our country give back life to those who die for her? Will she so much as avenge them? Now, I," she cried, "will avenge them!"

Baleful visions of the tragedy in which she had nearly fallen a victim rose up and formed themselves before her eyes; a mad impulse seized this gracious being, who held modesty to be a woman's first artifice, and she marched abruptly over to the amazed commandant.

"For a few murdered soldiers," she said, "I will bring a head worth thousands of others beneath the axe upon your scaffold. Women carry on war but seldom, yet you, however old you may be, may pick up excellent stratagems in my school. I will give over to your bayonets in him a whole family, his ancestors, his present, past, and future. Insomuch as I have been kind and true to him, so I will be crafty and false! Yes, commandant! I mean to bring this gallant gentleman home to me; he shall only leave my arms to go to his death! Yes! I shall never know a rival. The wretch pronounced his own death sentence: '*A day without a morrow!*' . . . We shall both of us be avenged, your Republic and I . . . The Republic!" she went on, with a strange inflection in her voice that startled Hulot; "so the

rebel will die, after all, for bearing arms against his country? France herself will cheat me of my revenge? . . . Ah! one life is such a little thing—one death can only atone for a single crime! But since this gentleman has but one head to lose, in the night before he dies I will make him feel that he is losing more than a life. But before all things, commandant, for it will be you who will put him to death," and a sigh broke from her, "act in such a sort that nothing shall betray my treason; let him die with a full belief in my faith. That is all that I ask of you. Let him see nothing but me —me and my endearments!"

With that she stopped; but in the dark flush on her face Hulot and Corentin saw that anger and rage had not extinguished modesty. Marie shuddered violently as she uttered these last words; she seemed to listen for them afresh, as if she were not sure that she had spoken them. She trembled undisguisedly, and made the involuntary gesture of a woman who has suddenly dropped her veil.

"But you have had him already in your hands!" said Corentin.

"Very likely," she replied bitterly.

"Why did you stop me when I had hold of him?" asked Hulot.

"Eh, commandant! We did not know that it was *he!*" Suddenly, the excited woman who was hurriedly pacing to and fro, flinging fiery glances at the two witnesses of this tempest, grew calmer. "I hardly know myself," she said, and her tones were those of a man. "What is the good of talking? We must go in search of him!"

"Go in search of him?" repeated Hulot; "my dear child mind that you do not. We are not masters of this country side; and if you venture to stir a hundred paces out of the town, you will either be killed or taken prisoner."

"There is no such thing as danger for those who are seeking for vengeance!" she answered, and with a disdainful gesture she dismissed the two men from her presence; the sight of them filled her with shame.

"What a woman!" Hulot exclaimed as he withdrew with Corentin. "What a notion those police fellows in Paris have had! But she will never give him up to us," he added with a shake of the head.

"Oh, yes, she will!" Corentin replied.

"Can you not see that she is in love with him?" said Hulot.

"That is exactly the reason. Moreover," said Corentin, as he looked at the astonished commandant, "I am on the spot to prevent any nonsense on her part; for to my thinking, comrade, there is no love affair worth three hundred thousand francs."

With that, this diplomatist of the Home Office left the soldier, who followed him with his eyes; and, when he no longer heard the sound of the other's footsteps, he heaved a sigh and remarked to himself: "So there is some advantage at times in being a mere thick-head like me? . . . *Tonnerre de Dieu!* If I hit upon the Gars, we will fight it out man to man, or my name is not Hulot; for now that they have instituted councils of war, if yonder fox is anything to go by, my conscience will be no cleaner, I should say, than any trooper's shirt who has gone under fire for the first time."

The massacre at the Vivetière and the desire to avenge his two friends had been quite as strong inducements to resume the command of his demi-brigade as the letter Hulot had received from the new minister Berthier, who informed him that under the circumstances his resignation could not be accepted. Along with the official despatch came a confidential letter, containing no information concerning Mlle. de Verneuil's mission, but informing him that this incident was completely without the scope of military operations, and should therefore in no way hamper their progress. The share of the military leaders in that matter was confined, so it ran, "to seconding the honorable citoyenne if occasion should call for it."

The reports which Hulot received having made it clear to him that the mobilization of the Chouans was being di-

rected upon Fougères, he threw two battalions of his demi-brigade into that important place, bringing them by forced marches and hidden ways. Everything about him had wrought to bring back all the fire of his youth into the veteran commandant—the perils of his country, a hatred of the aristocracy whose partisans were threatening such a considerable district, and the promptings of friendship.

"This, at last, is the life I was longing for!" cried Mlle. de Verneuil when she was alone with Francine. "However swiftly the hours may pass, they are like centuries of thought to me." She took Francine's hand impulsively, and these words fell from her, one by one, in a voice like the first robin's notes after a storm. "I cannot help it, my child. I always see those two exquisite lips; the short, slightly prominent chin, and those eyes of fire; I hear again the 'Hue!' of the postilion, and at last I fall to dreaming. . . . And why is there such hatred in me when I awake?"

She heaved a long sigh, and rose to her feet. She looked out for the first time over the country, which had been given over to civil war by the cruel noble whom she would fain combat—she and no other. The view had an attraction for her; it drew her out of doors to breathe more freely under the open sky; and if it was chance that determined her way, she was certainly under the influence of the dark power within us, which makes us look for a gleam of hope in some absurd course. Ideas that occur to us while we are under this spell are often realized; and then we attribute our instinctive insight to the faculty that we call presentiment—a power which is real, if unexplained, and which is ever ready at the beck and call of the passions, like a parasite who sometimes utters a true word among his lies.

III

A DAY WITHOUT A MORROW

AS THE FINAL EVENTS of this story were largely determined by the character of the country in which they took place, a detailed description of it is unavoidable, for otherwise the catastrophe will be difficult to understand.

The town of Fougères is partly situated on a mass of schistous rock that might have fallen forward from the hills that close round the western end of the wide valley of the Cousënon, each of which is differently named in different places round about. A narrow ravine, with the little stream called the Nançon running at the bottom of it, separates the town from these hills. The eastern side of the mass of rock commands a view of the same landscape that the traveller enjoys from the top of La Pèlerine; the only prospect from the western side is along the tortuous valley of the Nançon; but there is one spot whence it is possible to see a segment of the great circle formed by the main valley as well as the picturesque windings of the smaller one that opens out into it. Here the townspeople had elected to make a promenade, hither Mlle. de Verneuil was betaking herself, and this very place was to be the stage on which the drama begun at the Vivetière was to be carried out. However picturesque, therefore, the other parts of the town of Fougères may be, attention must be exclusively directed to the disposition of the country that is visible from the highest point of the promenade.

To give an idea of the appearance of the rock of Fougères when seen from this side, a comparison might be made between it and one of those huge towers, about which Saracen architects have fashioned tier after tier of balconies, con-

nected each with each by spiral staircases. The topmost point of the rock terminates in a Gothic church with its crockets, spire and buttresses, which completes the almost perfect sugar-loaf form of the whole. Before the door of this church, which is dedicated to St. Leonard, lies a little irregularly shaped square. The soil there is banked up and sustained by a wall that runs round it like a balustrade, and it communicates with the promenade by a flight of steps. This esplanade runs round about the rock like a second cornice, several fathoms below the square of St. Leonard, presenting an open space planted with trees, which is brought to an end by the fortifications of the town. Then, after a further interval of some ten fathoms of rocks and masonry which support this terrace (thanks, partly to the fortunate disposition of the schist, and partly to patient industry), there lies a winding road called "The Queen's Staircase," cut out of the rock itself, and leading to a bridge built over the Nançon by Anne of Brittany. Underneath this road again, which makes a third cornice, the gardens slope in terraces down to the river, looking like tiers of staging covered with flowers.

Lofty crags, called the hills of St. Sulpice, after the name of the suburb of the town in which they rise, run parallel with the promenade and along the river side. Their sides slope gently down into the main valley, wherein they take a sharp turn toward the north. These steep, dark, and barren crags seem almost to touch the schistous rock of the promenade, coming in some places within a gunshot of them, and they shelter from the north wind a narrow valley some hundred fathoms in depth, wherein the Nançon divides itself into three streams, and waters a meadow-land pleasantly laid out and filled with houses.

To the south, just where the town, properly speaking, comes to an end, and the suburb of St. Leonard begins, the rock of Fougeres makes a curve, grows less lofty and precipitous, turns into the main valley and stretches along the river, which is thus shut in between it and the hills of St.

Sulpice in a narrow pass. Thence the river flows in two streams toward the Couësnon into which it falls. This picturesque range of rocky hillsides is named the Nid-aux-Crocs. The dale which is shut in by them is called the valley of Gibarry, and its rich meadows produce a large proportion of the butter known to epicures as Prévalaye butter.

At the spot where the promenade abuts upon the fortifications, a tower rises called the Papegaut's Tower. The house in which Mlle. de Verneuil was staying was built upon this square structure. Beyond this point there is nothing but a sheer space, sometimes of wall, sometimes of rock, wherever the latter presents a smooth surface. The portion of the town that is built upon this lofty and impregnable base describes an immense half-moon, at the termination of which the rocks slope away and are hollowed out so as to give an outlet to the Nançon. Here stands the gate of St. Sulpice, through which the way lies into the suburb that bears the same name. On a knoll of granite rock, commanding the entrance into three valleys wherein several roads converge, rise the ancient crenellated turrets of the feudal castle of Fougères, one of the most considerable structures erected by the Dukes of Britanny, with its walls fifteen fathoms high and fifteen feet thick. On its eastern side the castle is protected by a pond in which the Nançon rises, flowing thence through the moats, and turning several mills between the gate of St. Sulpice and the drawbridges of the fortress. On the western side the perpendicular rocks on which the castle is built form a sufficient defence.

Thus, from the promenade to this magnificent relic of the Middle Ages, adorned with its mantling ivy and its turrets round or square, in any one of which a whole regiment might be quartered; the castle, the town, and its rock protected by a curtain of wall, or by scarps hewn in the rock itself, form one immense horseshoe, surrounded by precipices, on the sides of which (time aiding them) the Bretons have beaten out a few narrow footpaths. Blocks of stone project here

and there as if by way of decoration, or water oozes out through crannies where spindling trees are growing. Further on, a few less precipitous slabs of granite support a little grass which attracts the goats; and the heather grows everywhere, penetrating many a damp crevice and covering the dark broken surface with its rosy wreaths. In the depth of this great funnel the little river twists and winds in a land of meadow, always carpeted with soft verdure.

At the foot of the castle there rises, between several masses of granite, the Church dedicated to St. Sulpice, which gives its name to a suburb on the other side of the Nançon. This suburb seems to lie in the bottom of an abyss; the pointed steeple of its church is not as high as the rocks that seem ready to fall down upon it and its surrounding cottages, which are picturesquely watered by certain branches of the Nançon, shaded by trees and adorned with gardens. These make an irregular indentation in the half-moon described by the promenade, the town, and the castle; and their details are in quaint contrast to the sober-looking amphitheatre which they confront. The whole town of Fougères, with its churches and its suburbs, and even the hills of St. Sulpice, has for its frame and setting the heights of Rillé, which form a part of the chain of hills that encircle the main valley of the Couësnon.

Such are the most striking natural features of this country. Its principal characteristic is a rugged wildness, softened by intervals of smiling land, by a happy mingling of the most magnificent works of man with the caprices of a soil vexed by unlooked-for contrasts; by an indescribable something that takes us at unawares, that amazes and overawes us. In no other part of France does the traveller meet with contrasts on so magnificent a scale as in this wide valley of the Couësnon and among the dales that are almost hidden between the craggy rocks of Fougères and the heights of Rillé. There is beauty of a rare kind in which chance is the predominating element, but which, for all that, lacks no charm due to the harmony of nature. Here are

clear, limpid, rushing streams; hills clad in the luxuriant vegetation of these districts; stern masses of rock and shapely buildings; natural fortifications and towers of granite built by man. Here are all the effects wrought by the play of light and shadow, all the varied hues of different kinds of foliage so highly valued by artists; groups of houses alive with a busy population, and solitary places where the granite scarcely affords a hold to the pale lichens that cling about stone surfaces; here, in short, is every suggestion of beauty or of dread that can be looked for from a landscape—a poetry full of constantly renewed magic, of pictures of the grandest kind, and charming scenes of country life. Here is Brittany in its flower.

The Papegaut's Tower, as it is called, upon which the house occupied by Mlle. de Verneuil was built, has its foundations at the very bottom of the precipice, and rises to the level of the esplanade which has been constructed, cornice fashion, in front of St. Leonard's church. The view from this house, which is isolated on three of its sides, includes the great horseshoe (which has its starting-point in the tower itself), the winding valley of the Nançon, and the square of St. Leonard. The dwelling is one of a row of houses three centuries old, built of wood, and lying in a parallel line with the north side of the church in such a manner as to form a blind alley with it. The alley opens on to a steep road that passes along one side of the church and leads to the gate of St. Leonard, toward which Mlle. de Verneuil was descending.

Marie naturally felt no inclination to go up into the square before the church, beneath which she was standing, so she turned in the direction of the promenade. When she had passed through the little green-painted barrier, which stood before the guardhouse now established in the tower of St. Leonard's gate, the conflict within her was stilled by the sight of the wonderful view. She first admired the wide stretch of the main valley of the Couesnon—the whole length and breadth of it met her eyes, from the summit of La Pèlerine to the level plain, through which the road runs to Vitré.

Then her gaze rested upon the Nid-aux-Crocs, upon the winding lines of the valley of Gibarry, and upon the ridges of the hills, bathed as they were in the glow of the misty sunset. The depth of the valley of the Nançon almost startled her; the tallest poplars down below scarcely reached the height of the garden walls that lay beneath the Queen's Staircase. On she went, one marvel still succeeding to another, till she reached a point whence she could see the main valley beyond the dale of Gibarry, and the whole lovely landscape was framed by the horseshoe of the town, the crags of St. Sulpice, and the heights of Rillé.

At that hour of day, the smoke, rising from the houses in the suburbs and the valleys, made wreaths of cloud in the atmosphere; every object dawned on the sight through a sort of bluish canopy. The garish daylight hues had begun to fade, the tone of the sky changed to a pearly gray, the moon flung its misty light over the depths of the fair land below—all the surroundings tended to steep the soul in musings and to call memories of beloved forms.

Suddenly she lost all interest in the shingle roofs of the suburb of St. Sulpice, in its church with the bold spire that was all but swallowed up in the depths of the valley, in the ivy and clematis that had grown for centuries over the walls of the old fortress, whence the Nançon issues, boiling over its mill-wheels, and in all else in the landscape. In vain the sunset poured a golden dust and sheets of crimson light over the peaceful dwellings scattered among the rocks, along the stream, and in the meadows far below—she was staring fixedly at the crags of St. Sulpice. The wild hope that had brought her out upon the promenade had been miraculously realized.

Across the *ajoncs* and the bushes of broom that grew along the tops of the opposite hillsides, she thought that, in spite of their goatskin clothing, she could recognize several of the guests at the Vivetière. The Gars was conspicuous among them; his slightest movements stood out against the soft glow of the sunset. Some paces behind the principal

group she saw her formidable enemy Mme. du Gua. For a moment Mlle. de Verneuil might have thought that she was dreaming, but her rival's hatred very soon made it plain to her that everything in this dream had life. The rapt attention with which she was watching every slightest gesture on the part of the Marquis prevented her from noticing the care with which Mme. du Gua was aiming a rifle at her. The echoes of the hills rang with the report, and a ball whistling close to Marie revealed her rival's skill to her.

"She is sending me her card!" she exclaimed, smiling to herself. In a moment there was a cry in chorus of "Who goes there?" echoed by sentinel after sentinel, all the way from the castle to St. Leonard's gate, which made the Chouans aware of the precautions taken by the Fougèrais, since the least vulnerable side of their ramparts was so well guarded.

"It is she, and it is he!" said Marie to herself. With the speed of lightning the idea of seeking, tracking, and surprising the Marquis flashed across her. "I have no weapon!" she exclaimed. She bethought herself that, just as she was leaving Paris, she had thrown into a trunk an elegant dagger, a thing that had once belonged to a sultan. She had provided herself with it when she set out for the scene of the war in the same humor which prompts some amusing beings to equip themselves with notebooks, in which to jot down the ideas that occur to them upon a journey. She had been less attracted, however, by the prospect of bloodshed than by the mere pleasure of carrying a beautiful jewelled kandjar, and of playing with the blade, as clean as an eye glance. Three days ago, when she had sought to kill herself to escape her rival's hideous revenge, she had keenly regretted leaving this weapon in her trunk.

In a moment she reached the house again, found the dagger, thrust it into her belt, muffled a great shawl round about her shoulders, wound a black lace scarf about her hair, covered her head with a large flapping hat, like those worn by the Chouans, which she borrowed from a servant about the house; and, with the self-possession which the passions

sometimes bestow, she took up the glove belonging to the Marquis, which Marche-a-Terre had given to her as a safe-conduct. In response to Francine's alarmed inquiries, she replied—"What would you have; I would go to hell to look for *him!*" and she went back to the promenade.

The Gars was still there in the same place, but he was alone. From the direction taken by his perspective-glass he appeared to be scrutinizing with a soldier's minute attention the various fords of the Nançon, the Queen's Staircase, and the road that starts from the gate of St. Sulpice, winds by the church, and joins the highroad within range of the guns of the castle. Mlle. de Verneuil sprang down the narrow paths made by the goatherds and their flocks upon the slopes of the promenade, gained the Queen's Staircase, reached the foot of the crags, crossed the Nançon, passed through the suburb, found her way instinctively, like a bird in the desert, among the perilous scarped rocks of St. Sulpice, and very soon reached a slippery track over the granite bowlders. In spite of the bushes of broom, the thorny *ajoncs*, and the sharp loose stones, she began to climb with an amount of energy unknown perhaps in man, but which woman, when completely carried away by passions, possesses for a time.

Night overtook Marie just as she reached the summit, and tried to discover, by the pale moonlight, the way which the Marquis must have taken. It was a search made persistently but without any success. From the silence that prevailed throughout the region she gathered that the Chouans and their leader had retired. She suddenly relinquished the effort begun in passion, along with the hope that had inspired it. She found herself benighted and alone in the midst of a strange country where war was raging; she began to reflect, and Hulot's warning and Mme. du Gua's shot made her shudder with fear. The silence of night upon the hills was so deep that she could hear the least rustle of a wandering leaf, even a long way off; such faint sounds as these, trembling in the air, gave a gloomy idea of the utter solitude and quiet.

The wind blew furiously in the sky above, bringing up clouds that cast shadows below; the effects of alternate light and darkness increased her fears, by giving a fantastic and terrifying appearance to objects of the most harmless kind.

She turned her eyes toward the houses in Fougères; the lights of every household glimmered like stars on earth, and all at once she descried the Papegaut Tower. The distance she must traverse in order to reach her dwelling was short indeed, but that distance consisted of a precipice. She had a sufficiently clear recollection of the abysses at the brink of the narrow footpath by which she had come to see that she would incur greater peril by trying to return to Fougères than by continuing her enterprise. She reflected that the Marquis's glove would deprive her nocturnal excursion of all its dangers, if the Chouans should be in possession of the country. She had only Mme. du Gua to dread. At the thought of her, Marie clutched her dagger and tried to go in the direction of a house, of the roofs of which she had caught a glimpse as she reached the crags of St. Sulpice. She made but slow progress. Never before had she known the majesty of darkness that oppresses a solitary being at night in the midst of a wild country, over which the mountains, like a company of giants, seem to bow their lofty heads.

The rustle of her dress, caught by the gorse, made her tremble more than once; more than once she quickened her pace, only to slacken it again with the thought that her last hour had come. But circumstances very soon assumed a character which might perhaps have daunted the boldest men, and which threw Marie into one of those panics that make such heavy demands upon the springs of life within us, that everything, strength as weakness, is exaggerated in the individual. The weakest natures at such times show an unexpected strength; and the strongest grow frantic with terror.

Marie heard strange sounds at a little distance. They were vague and distinct at the same time, just as the sur-

rounding night was lighter and darker by turns. They seemed to indicate tumult and confusion. She strained her ears to catch them. They rose from the depths of the earth, which appeared to be shaking with the tramp of a great multitude of men on the march. A momentary gleam of light allowed Mlle. de Verneuil to see, at the distance of a few paces, a long file of horrid forms swaying like ears of corn in the fields—stealing along like goblin shapes. But hardly had she seen them when darkness, like a black curtain, fell again and hid from her this fearful vision full of yellow and glittering eyes. She shrank back and rushed swiftly to the top of a slope, to escape three of these horrible figures that were approaching her.

"Did you see him?" asked one.

"I felt a cold wind when he passed near me," a hoarse voice replied.

"I myself breathed the dank air and the smell of a graveyard," said a third.

"How pale he is!" the first speaker began.

"Why has *he* returned alone out of all who fell at La Pèlerine?" asked the second.

"Ah, why indeed?" replied the third. "Why should those who belong to the Sacred Heart have the preference? However, I would rather die unconfessed than wander about as he does, neither eating nor drinking, without any blood in his veins or flesh on his bones."

"Ah! . . ."

This exclamation, or rather fearful yell, broke from the group as one of the Chouans pointed to the slender form and pallid face of Mlle. de Verneuil, who was flying with the speed of fear, while none of them caught the slightest sound of her movements.

"There he is!—Here he is!—Where is he?—There!—Here!—He has vanished!—No!—Yes!—Do you see him?" The words rolled out like the monotonous sound of waves upon the beach.

Mlle. de Verneuil went on bravely toward the house, and

saw the dim figures of a crowd which fled away at her approach with every sign of panic-stricken fear. A strange force within her seemed to urge her on; its influence was overpowering her; a sensation of corporeal lightness, which she could not understand, was a fresh source of terror to her. The shapes which rose in masses at her approach, as if from under the earth, where they appeared to be lying, gave groans which seemed to have nothing human about them. At last, and not without difficulty, she reached a garden, now lying waste, with all its fencing and hedges broken down. She showed her glove to a sentinel who stopped her. The moonlight fell upon her form, and at the sight the sentinel, who had pointed his carbine at Marie, let the weapon fall from his hand, uttering a hoarse cry that rang through the country round about.

She saw large masses of buildings, with a light here and there which showed that some of the rooms were inhabited; and without further let or hindrance she reached the wall of the house. Through the first window toward which she went she beheld Mme. du Gua and the chiefs who had come together at the Vivetière. This sight, combined with the consciousness of the peril she was in, made her reckless. She flung herself violently upon a low opening, covered with massive iron bars, and discerned the Marquis two paces distant from her, melancholy and alone, in a long vaulted hall. The reflections of the firelight from the hearth, before which he was sitting in a cumbrous chair, lighted up his face with flickering hues of red that made the whole scene look like a vision. The poor girl strained herself to the bars, trembling, but otherwise motionless; she hoped that she should hear him if he spoke in the deep silence that prevailed. She saw him looking pale, dejected, and disheartened; she flattered herself that she was one of the causes of his melancholy, and her anger turned to sympathy, and sympathy to tenderness; she suddenly felt that it was not vengeance alone that had drawn her thither. The Marquis rose to his feet, turned his head, and stood bewildered when

he beheld Mlle. de Verneuil's face as in a cloud there. He made a sign of scorn and impatience as he cried, "Must I see that she-devil always before me, even in my waking hours?"

This intense contempt he had conceived for her drew a frenzied laugh from the poor girl. The young chief shuddered at it, and sprang to the window. Mlle. de Verneuil fled. She heard a man's footsteps behind her, and took her pursuer for Montauran. In her desire to escape from him she discerned no obstacles; she would have scaled walls or flown through the air; she could have taken the road to hell if so be she might read no longer, in letters of flame, the words, "He scorns you!" written upon his forehead—words which a voice repeated within her in trumpet tones. After walking on, she knew not whither, she stopped, for a chilly dampness seemed to strike through her. She heard the footsteps of several people, and, impelled by fear, she descended a staircase that led into an underground cellar. As she reached the lowest step, she listened for the footsteps of the pursuers, trying to ascertain their direction; but though the sounds without were turbulent enough, she could hear the lamentable groans of a human being within, which added to her terrors.

A streak of light from the head of the staircase led her to fear lest her hiding-place had been discovered by her persecutors. Her desire to escape them lent her fresh strength. A few moments later, when her ideas were more collected, she found it very difficult to explain the way in which she had contrived to scramble up the low wall on the top of which she was hiding. At first she did not even notice the cramp which her constrained position caused her to experience; but the pain at last grew intolerable, for, under the arch of the vault, she was much in the position of a crouching Venus ensconced by some amateur in too narrow a niche. The wall itself was built of granite, and fairly broad; it separated the staircase from the cellar whence the groans were issuing. She soon saw a stranger clad in goatskins come down the

staircase beneath her, and turn under the archway, without the least sign about him to indicate an excited search. In her eagerness to discover any chance of saving herself, Mlle. de Verneuil waited anxiously till the cellar was illuminated by the light which the stranger was carrying; then she beheld on the floor a shapeless but living mass, trying to drag itself toward a certain part of the wall by violent and repeated jerks, like the convulsive writhings of a carp that has been drawn from the river and laid on the bank.

A small resinous torch soon cast a bluish and uncertain light over the cellar. In spite of the romance with which Mlle. de Verneuil had invested the groined roof that rang with the sounds of agonized entreaties, she was compelled to recognize the fact that she was in an underground kitchen which had been long unused. Thus illuminated, the shapeless mass took the form of a short, stout person whose every limb had been carefully tied, but who seemed to have been left on the damp flags of the pavement without any other precaution on the part of those who had seized him.

At sight of the stranger (who carried a light in one hand and a fagot in the other), the prisoner gave a deep groan, which wrought so powerfully upon Mlle. de Verneuil's feelings that she forgot her own terror and despair, and the frightful cramp which was benumbing her doubled-up limbs; she could scarcely keep herself still. The Chouan flung down his fagot upon the hearth, after assuring himself of the solidity of an old pot-hook which hung down the whole length of a sheet of cast iron, and set the wood alight with his torch. Mlle. de Verneuil then recognized, not without alarm, the cunning Pille-Miche, to whom her rival had assigned her. His form, lighted up by the flames, looked very like one of the tiny grotesque figures that Germans carve in wood. A broad grin overspread his furrowed and sunburned face at the wails that went up from his prisoner.

"You see," he remarked to the sufferer, "that Christians such as we are do not go back on our words as you do. This fire here will take some of the stiffness out of your legs, and

out of your hands and tongue too. . . . But hold on! I do not see a dripping-pan to put under your feet, and they are so fat that they might put the fire out. Your house must be very badly furnished when you cannot find everything in it to make the master thoroughly comfortable when he is warming himself."

At this the victim uttered a piercing shriek, as if he hoped that his voice would rise above the arched roof, and bring some one to his rescue.

"Sing away as much as you like, M. d'Orgemont! They have all gone to bed upstairs, and Marche-a-Terre is coming; he will shut the cellar door."

As he spoke, Pille-Miche rapped the butt end of his carbine over the mantel-piece, the flags on the kitchen floor, the walls and the stoves, trying to discover the place where the miser had hidden his gold. The search was so cleverly conducted that d'Orgemont did not utter a further sound. He seemed possessed by the fear that some frightened servant might have betrayed him; for though he had trusted nobody, his habits might have given rise to very well grounded suspicions. From time to time Pille-Miche turned sharply and looked at his victim, as in the children's game, when they try to guess from the unconscious expression of one of their number the spot where he has hidden a given object as they move hither and thither in search of it. D'Orgemont showed some alarm for the Chouan's benefit when he struck a hollow sound from the stoves, and seemed to have a mind to divert Pille-Miche's credulous greed in this way for a time.

Just then three other Chouans came running down the staircase, and suddenly entered the kitchen. Pille-Miche abandoned his search when he saw Marche-a-Terre, flinging a glance at d'Orgemont with all the ferocity that his disappointed avarice had aroused in him.

"Marie Lambrequin has come to life again!" said Marche-a-Terre, with a preoccupation that showed how all other interests faded away before such a momentous piece of news.

"I am not surprised at that," answered Pille-Miche; "he

took the sacrament so often! He seemed to have *le bon Dieu* all to himself."

"Aha!" remarked Mène-a-Bien. "But it is of no more help to him now than shoes to a dead man. He did not receive absolution before that business at La Pèlerine, and there he is! He misguided that girl of Gogelu's, and was weighed down by a mortal sin. Besides that, the Abbé Gudin told us that he would have to wait a couple of months before he could come back for good. We saw him go along in front, every man jack of us. He is white, and cold, and he flits about; there is the scent of the grave about him."

"And his reverence assured us that if the ghost could catch hold of anybody he would make just such another of him," the fourth Chouan put in.

The wry face of the last speaker aroused Marche-a-Terre from religious musings prompted by the newly-wrought miracle, which, according to the Abbé Gudin, might be renewed for every pious champion of religion and royalty.

"Now you see, Galope-Chopine," he said to the neophyte, with a certain gravity, "what comes of the slightest omission of the duties commanded by our holy religion. St. Anne of Auray counselled us not to pass over the smallest faults among ourselves. Your cousin Pille-Miche has asked for the *surveillance* of Fougères for you; the Gars has intrusted you with it, and you will be well paid. But you, perhaps, know the sort of flour we knead into bread for traitors?"

"Yes, M. Marche-a-Terre."

"Do you know why I tell you that? There are folk who hint that you have a hankering after cider and round pence; but there is to be no feathering of your nest, you are to be *our* man now."

"With all due respect, M. Marche-a-Terre, cider and pence are two good things which do not anywise hinder salvation."

"If my cousin makes any blunders," said Pille-Miche, "it will be for want of knowing better."

"No matter how it happens," cried Marche-a-Terre in a voice that shook the roof, "if anything goes wrong I shall not let him off. You shall answer for him," he added to Pille-Miche; "if he gets himself into trouble, I will take it out of the lining of your goatskins."

"But, asking your pardon, M. Marche-a-Terre," Galope-Chopine began, "hasn't it often happened to you yourself to mistake *Contre-Chuins* for *Chuins?*"

"My friend," replied Marche-a-Terre in a dry tone of voice, "do not let that happen to you again, or I will slice you in two like a turnip. Those who are sent out by the Gars will have his glove. But since this affair at the Vivetière, the Grande-Garce fastens a green ribbon to it."

Pille-Miche jogged his comrade's elbow sharply, pointing out d'Orgemont, who was pretending to sleep; but Marche-a-Terre and Pille-Miche knew by experience that no one had ever yet slept by the side of their fire, and though the last remarks to Galope-Chopine had been spoken in low tones, yet the sufferer might have understood them; so all four of the Chouans looked at him for a moment, and no doubt concluded that fear had deprived him of the use of his senses. Suddenly Marche-a-Terre gave a slight sign; Pille-Miche drew off d'Orgemont's shoes and stockings, Mène-a-Bien and Galope-Chopine seized him by the waist and carried him to the hearth. Next Marche-a-Terre took a band from the fagot and bound the miser's feet to the pot-hook. All these proceedings, together with the incredible quickness of their movements, forced cries from the victim, which grew heart-rending when Pille-Miche had heaped up the glowing coals under his legs.

"My friends, my good friends," cried d'Orgemont, "you will hurt me! I am a Christian as you are. . . ."

"You are lying in your throat," answered Marche-a-Terre. "Your brother denied the existence of God, and you yourself bought the Abbey of Juvigny. The Abbé Gudin says that we may roast apostates without scruple."

"But, my brethren in religion, I do not refuse to pay you."

"We gave you two weeks, and now two months have passed, and Galope-Chopine here has received nothing."

"Then you have received nothing, Galope-Chopine?" asked the miser in despair.

"Nothing whatever, M. d'Orgemont," replied the alarmed Galope-Chopine.

The cries, which had become a continuous kind of growl, like the death-rattle of a dying man, began afresh with extraordinary violence. The Chouans were as much used to this kind of scene as to seeing dogs go about without shoes; and were looking on so coolly while d'Orgemont writhed and yelled that they might have been travellers waiting round the fire in an inn-kitchen until the joint is sufficiently roasted to eat.

"I am dying! I am dying!" cried the victim, "and you will not have my money."

Violent as his outcries were, Pille-Miche noticed that the fire had not yet scorched him; it was stirred therefore in a very artistic fashion, so as to make the flames leap a little higher. At this, d'Orgemont said in dejected tones—"Untie me, my friends. . . . What do you want? A hundred crowns? A thousand? Ten thousand? A hundred thousand? I offer you two hundred crowns."

His tone was so piteous that Mlle. de Verneuil forgot her own danger, and an exclamation broke from her.

"Who spoke?" asked Marche-a-Terre.

The Chouans cast uneasy glances about them. The very men who were so courageous under a murderous fire from the cannon's mouth dared not face a ghost. Pille-Miche alone heard with undivided attention the confession which increasing torments wrung from his victim.

"Five hundred crowns. . . . Yes, I will pay it!" said the miser.

"Pshaw! Where are they?" calmly responded Pille-Miche.

"Eh? Oh, they are under the first apple tree. . . . Holy Virgin! At the end of the garden, to the left. . . . You

are bandits! . . . You are robbers! . . . Oh! I am dying. . . . There are ten thousand francs there."

"I will not take francs," said Marche-a-Terre; "they must be livres. Your Republican crowns have heathen figures on them. They will never pass."

"It is all in livres, in good louis d'or. But let me loose, let me loose. . . . You know where my life is . . . my hoard!"

The four Chouans looked at each other, considering which of their number could be trusted with the errand of unearthing the money. But just then their ferocious cruelty had so revolted Mlle. de Verneuil that, although she could not be sure that the rôle assigned to her by her pale face would still preserve her from danger, she cried bravely in a deep tone of voice, "Do you not fear the wrath of God? Unbind him, you savages!"

The Chouans looked up. They saw eyes that shone like stars, in mid-air, and fled in terror. Mlle. de Verneuil sprang down into the kitchen, ran up to d'Orgemont, and drew him from the fire with such energy that the fagot band snapped, then with the blade of her dagger she cut the cords with which he was bound. As soon as the miser was liberated and stood on his feet, the first expression that crossed his face was a dolorous but sardonic smile. "Off with you!" he said; "go to the apple tree, brigands! . . . Ho! ho! This is the second time that I have hoodwinked them, and they shall not get hold of me a third time!"

Just then a woman's voice sounded without. "A ghost!" cried Mme. du Gua. "A *ghost!* Idiots! It is *she!* A thousand crowns to any one who will bring that harlot's head to me!"

Mme. de Verneuil turned pale, but the miser smiled. He took her hand, drew her under the mantel-board of the chimney, and saw that she left no least trace of her passage by leading her round in such a way that the fire, which took up but a little space, was not disturbed. He pressed a spring, the sheet of cast-iron rose; and before their foes came back

into the cellar, the heavy door of their hiding-place had slipped noiselessly back again. Then the fair Parisian understood the carp-like struggles which had been made by the luckless banker, and to which she had been a witness.

"You see, madame!" cried Marche-a-Terre. "The ghost has taken the Blue for his comrade."

Great must their alarm have been, for such a dead silence followed his words that d'Orgemont and his companion could hear the Chouans muttering, "*Ave, sancta Anna Auriaca gratia plena, Dominus tecum,*" and so forth.

"The simpletons are saying their prayers!" exclaimed d'Orgemont.

"Are you not afraid," said Mlle. de Verneuil to her companion, "of making known our hiding-place?"

The old miser's laugh dispelled the Parisian girl's fears.

"The plate is set in a slab of granite ten inches thick. We can hear them, but they cannot hear us." He then gently took the hand of his liberatress, and led her toward a crevice through which the fresh breeze came in whiffs; she guessed that this opening had been contrived in the shaft of the chimney.

"Aha!" d'Orgemont began again. "The devil! My legs smart a bit. That 'Filly of Charette's,' as they call her at Nantes, is not such a fool as to gainsay those faithful believers of hers. She knows very well that if they were not so besotted, they would not fight against their own interests. There she is, praying along with them. It must be a pretty sight to see her saying her *Ave* to St. Anne of Auray! She would be better employed in plundering a coach so as to pay me back those four thousand francs that she owes me. What with the costs and the interest, it mounts up to quite four thousand seven hundred and forty-five francs, and some centimes over."

Their prayer ended, the Chouans rose from their knees and went. Old d'Orgemont squeezed Mlle. de Verneuil's hand by way of apprising her that, nevertheless, danger still existed.

"No, madame," cried Pille-Miche after a pause of a few minutes, "you might stop here for ten years. They will not come back."

"But *she* has not gone out; she must be here!" persisted "Charette's Filly."

"No, no, madame; they have flown right through the walls. Did not the devil, once before, fly away from here with a priest who had taken the oath under our eyes?"

"You are a miser as he is, Pille-Miche, and yet you cannot see that the old niggard might very probably spend some thousands of livres in making a recess in the foundations of these vaults, with a secret entrance to it."

The girl and the miser heard the guffaw that broke from Pille-Miche. "Very true!" he said.

"Stop here," Mme. du Gua went on. "Lie in wait for them as they come out. For one single shot, I will give you all that you will find in our usurer's treasury. If you want me to pardon you for selling that girl, after I had told you to kill her, you must obey me."

"Usurer!" said old d'Orgemont, "and yet I only charged her nine per cent on the loan. I had a mortgage, it is true, as a security. But now you see how grateful she is! Come, madame; if God punishes us for doing ill, the devil is here to punish us for doing well; and man's position between these two extremities, without any notion of what the future may be, always looks, to my thinking, like a sum in proportion, wherein the value of x is undiscoverable."

He fetched a hollow-sounding sigh which was peculiar to him; for his breath as it passed through his larynx seemed to come in contact with and to strike two aged and relaxed vocal chords. The sounds made by Pille-Miche and Mme. du Gua as they tried the walls, the vaulted roof, and the pavement seemed to reassure d'Orgemont; he took his liberatress's hand to help her to climb a narrow spiral staircase, hollowed in the thickness of the granite rock. When they had come up a score of steps the faint glow of a lamp lighted up their faces. The miser stopped and turned to his com-

panion, looking closely at her face as if he had been gazing upon and turning over and over some doubtful bill to be discounted. He heaved his terrible sigh.

"When I brought you here," he said, after a moment's pause, "I completely discharged the obligation under which you laid me; so I do not see why I should give—"

"Leave me here, sir; I want nothing of you," she said.

Her last words, and possibly also the contempt visible in the beautiful face, reassured the little old man, for he went on, after a fresh sigh—"Ah! when I brought you here, I did too much not to go through with it—"

He politely helped Marie to climb some steps, arranged in a somewhat peculiar fashion, and brought her, half willingly, half reluctantly, into a little closet, four feet square, lighted by a lamp that hung from the roof. It was easy to see that the miser had made every preparation for spending more than one day in this retreat, in case the exigencies of civil war compelled him to make some stay there.

"Don't go near the wall! you might get covered with white dust," d'Orgemont exclaimed suddenly, as he thrust his hand hastily between the girl's shawl and the wall, which seemed to be newly whitewashed. The old miser's action produced an exactly opposite effect to the one intended. Mlle. de Verneuil looked straight in front of her at once, and saw a sort of construction in a corner. A cry of terror broke from her as she remarked its shape, for she thought that some human being had been put there in a standing position, and had been covered with plaster. D'Orgemont made a menacing sign, imposing silence upon her, and his own little china-blue eyes showed as much alarm as his companion's.

"Foolish girl!" cried he, "did you think I had murdered him? . . . That is my brother," he said, and there was a melancholy change in his sigh. "He was the first *recteur* to take the oath, and this was the one refuge where he was safe from the fury of the Chouans and of his fellow priests. To persecute such a well-regulated man as that! He was my

elder brother; he had the patience to teach me the decimal system, he and no other. Oh! he was a worthy priest! He was thrifty, and knew how to save. He died four years ago. I do not know what his disease was; but these priests, you see, have a habit of kneeling in prayer from time to time, and possibly he could never get used to the standing position here, as I myself have done. . . . I put him here; otherwise *they* would have disinterred him. Some day I may be able to bury him in consecrated earth, as the poor fellow used to say, for he only took the oath through fear."

A tear filled the hard eyes of the little old man. His red wig looked less ugly to the girl, who turned her own eyes away with an inward feeling of reverence for his sorrow; but notwithstanding his softened mood, d'Orgemont spoke again. "Do not go near the wall, or you—"

He did not take his gaze off Mlle. de Verneuil's eyes, for in this way he hoped to prevent her from scrutinizing the partition walls of the closet, in which the scanty supply of air hardly sufficed for the requirements of breathing. Yet Marie managed to steal a glance round about her, undetected by her Argus, and from the eccentric protuberances in the walls she inferred that the miser had built them himself out of bags of gold and silver.

In another moment, d'Orgemont was seized with a strange kind of ecstasy. The painful smarting sensation in his legs, and his apprehensions at the sight of a human being among his treasures, were plainly to be seen in every wrinkle; but, at the same time, there was an unaccustomed glow in his dry eyes; a generous emotion was aroused in him by the dangerous proximity of his neighbor, with the pink and white cheeks that invited kisses, and the dark velvet-like glances; so that the hot blood surged to his heart in such a way that he hardly knew whether it betokened life or death.

"Are you married?" he asked in a faltering voice.

"No," she answered, smiling.

"I have a little property," he said, heaving his peculiar sigh, "though I am not so rich as they all say I am. A

young girl like you should be fond of diamonds, jewelry, carriages, and gold," he added, looking about him in a dismayed fashion. "I have all these things to give you at my death. . . . And if you liked—"

There was so much calculation in the old man's eyes, even while this fleeting fancy possessed him, that while she shook her head, Mlle. de Verneuil could not help thinking that the miser had thought to marry her simply that he might bury his secret in the heart of a second self.

"Money," she said, with an ironical glance at d'Orgemont that left him half pleased, half vexed, "money is nothing to me. If all the gold that I have refused were here, you would be three times richer than you are."

"Don't go near the wall—"

"And yet nothing was asked of me but one look," she went on with indescribable pride.

"You were wrong. It was a capital piece of business. Just think of it—"

"Think that I have just heard a voice sounding here," broke in Mlle. de Verneuil, "and that one single syllable of it has more value for me than all your riches."

"You do not know how much—"

Before the miser could prevent her, Marie moved with her finger a little colored print, representing Louis XV. on horseback, and suddenly saw the Marquis beneath her, engaged in loading a blunderbuss. The opening concealed by the tiny panel, over which the print was pasted, apparently corresponded with some ornamental carving on the ceiling of the next room, where the Royalist general had no doubt been sleeping. D'Orgemont slid the old print back again with extreme heedfulness, and looked sternly at the young girl.

"Do not speak a word, if you value your life! It is no cockle-shell that you have grappled," he whispered in her ear, after a pause. "Do you know that the Marquis of Montauran draws a revenue of more than a hundred thousand livres from the rents of estates which have not yet

been sold? And the Consuls have just issued a decree putting a stop to the sequestrations. I saw it in the paper, in the 'Primidi de l'Ille-et-Vilaine.' Aha! the Gars there is a prettier man now, is he not? Your eyes are sparkling like two new louis d'ors."

Mlle. de Verneuil's glances had become exceedingly animated when she heard afresh the sounds of the voice that she knew so well. Since she had been standing there, buried as it were in a mine of wealth, her mind, which had been overwhelmed by these occurrences, regained its elasticity. She seemed to have made a sinister resolve, and to have some idea of the method of carrying it out.

"There is no recovering from such contempt as that," she said to herself; "and if he is to love me no more, I will kill him! No other woman shall have him!"

"No, Abbé, no!" cried the young chief, whose voice made itself heard; "it must be so."

"My lord Marquis," the Abbé Gudin remonstrated stiffly, "you will scandalize all Brittany by giving this ball at Saint James. Our villages are not stirred up by dancers, but by preachers. Have some small arms, and not fiddles."

"Abbé, you are clever enough to know that only in a general assembly of all our partisans can I see what I can undertake with them. A dinner seems to give a better opportunity of scrutinizing their countenances, and of understanding their intentions, than any possible espionage, which is moreover abhorrent to me. We will make them talk, glass in hand."

Marie trembled when she heard these words, for the idea of going to the ball, and of there avenging herself, occurred to her.

"Do you take me for an idiot, with your sermon against dancing!" Montauran went on. "Would not you yourself figure in a chaconne very willingly to find yourself re-established under your new name of Fathers of the Faith? Do you really not know that Bretons get up from mass to have a dance? Do you really not know that Messieurs Hyde de

Neuville and d'Andigné had a conference with the First Consul, five days ago, over the question of restoring his majesty, Louis XVIII.? If I am preparing at this moment to venture so rash a stroke, it is only to make the weight of our iron-bound shoes felt in these deliberations. Do you not know that all the chiefs in la Vendée, even Fontaine himself, are talking of submission? Ah! sir, the princes have clearly been misled as to the condition of things in France. The devotion which people tell them about is the devotion of place-men. Abbé, if I have dipped my feet in blood, I will not wade waist-deep in it without knowing wherefore. My devotion is for the King, and not for four crack-brained enthusiasts, for men overwhelmed with debt like Rifoël, for *chauffers* and—"

"Say it straight out, sir, for abbés who collect imposts on the highways so as to carry on the war!" interrupted the Abbé Gudin.

"Why should I not say it?" the Marquis answered tartly. "I will say more—the heroic age of La Vendée is past."

"My lord Marquis, we shall know how to work miracles without your aid."

"Yes, like the miracle in Marie Lambrequin's case," the Marquis answered, smiling. "Come, now, Abbé, let us have done with it. I know that you yourself do not shrink from danger, and you bring down a Blue or say your *oremus* equally well. God helping me, I hope to make you take a part in the coronation of the King with a mitre on your head."

This last phrase certainly had a magical effect upon the Abbé, for there sounded the ring of a rifle, and he cried—"I have fifty cartridges in my pockets, my lord Marquis, and my life is at the King's service."

"That is another debtor of mine," the miser said to Mlle. de Verneuil. "I am not speaking of a paltry five or six hundred crowns which he borrowed of me, but of a debt of blood, which I hope will be paid in full. The fiendish

Jesuit will never have as much evil befall him as I wish him; he swore that my brother should die, and stirred up the district against him. And why? Because the poor man had been afraid of the new laws!"

He put his ear to a particular spot in his hiding-place. "All the brigands are making off," he said. "They are going to work some other miracle. If only they do not attempt to set fire to the house, as they did last time, by way of a good-by!"

For another half-hour or thereabout Mlle. de Verneuil and d'Orgemont looked at each other, as each of them might have gazed at a picture. Then the gruff, coarse voice of Galope-Chopine called in a low tone, "There is no more danger now, M. d'Orgemont. My thirty crowns have been well earned this time!"

"My child," said the miser, "swear to me that you will shut your eyes."

Mlle. de Verneuil laid one of her hands over her eyelids; but for greater security, the old man blew out the lamp, took his liberatress by the hand, and assisted her to descend seven or eight steps in an awkward passage. After a few minutes, he gently drew down her hand, and she saw that she was in the miser's own room, which the Marquis of Montauran had just vacated.

"You can go now, my dear child," said the miser. "Do not look about you in that way. You have no money, of course. See, here are ten crowns; clipped ones, but still they will pass. When you are out of the garden, you will find a footpath which leads to the town, or the district, as they call it nowadays. But as the Chouans are at Fougères, it is not to be supposed that you could return thither at once; so you may stand in need of a safe asylum. Do not forget what I am going to tell you, and only take advantage of it in dire necessity. You will see a farmhouse beside the road which runs through the dale of Gibarry to the Nid-aux-Crocs. Big Cibot (called Galope-Chopine) lives there. Go inside, and say to his wife, 'Good-day, Bécanière!' and Bar-

bette will hide you. If Galope-Chopine should find you out, he will take you for a ghost, if it is night; and if it is broad daylight, ten crowns will mollify him. Good-by! Our accounts are squared. . . . If you liked," he added, with a wave of the hand, that indicated the fields that lay round about his house, "all that should be yours!"

Mlle. de Verneuil gave a grateful glance at this strange being, and succeeded in wringing a sigh from him, with several distinct tones in it.

"You will pay me back my ten crowns, of course; I say nothing about interest, as you note. You can pay them to the credit of my account, to Master Patrat, the notary in Fougères, who, if you should wish it, would draw up our marriage contract. Fair treasure! Good-by."

"Good-by," said she, with a smile, as she waved her hand to him.

"If you require any money," he called to her, "I will loan it to you at five per cent! Yes, only five. . . . Did I say five?" But she had gone.

"She looks to me like a good sort of girl," d'Orgemont continued; "but for all that, I shall make a change in the secret contrivance in my chimney."

Then he took a loaf that weighed twelve pounds, and a ham, and returned to his hiding-place.

As Mlle. de Verneuil walked in the open country, she felt as though life had begun anew. The chilly morning air against her face revived her, after so many hours during which she had encountered a close atmosphere. She tried to find the footpath that the miser had described; but after the setting of the moon, the darkness grew so dense that she was compelled to go as chance determined. Very soon the dread of falling over a precipice took possession of her, and this saved her life, for she suddenly stopped with a presentiment that if she went a step further she should find no earth beneath her feet. A breath of yet colder wind which played in her hair, the murmur of streams, and her own instinct, told her that she had come to the brink of the crags of St.

Sulpice. She cast her arms about a tree, and waited in keen anxiety for the dawn, for she heard sounds of armed men, human voices, and the trampling of horses. She felt thankful to the darkness which was preserving her from the peril of falling into the hands of the Chouans, if, as the miser had told her, they were surrounding Fougères.

A faint purple light, like the beacon-fires lighted at night as the signal of Liberty, passed over the mountain tops; but the lower slopes retained their cold bluish tints in contrast with the dewy mists that drifted over the valleys. Very soon a disk of ruby red rose slowly on the horizon, the skies felt its influence, the ups and downs of the landscape, the spire of St. Leonard's church, the crags and the meadows hidden in deep shadow gradually began to appear, the trees perched upon the heights stood out against the fires of dawn. With a sudden gracious start the sun unwound himself from the streamers of fiery red, of yellow and sapphire, that surrounded him. The brilliant light united one sloping hillside to another by its level beams, and overflowed valley after valley. The shadows fled away, and all nature was overwhelmed with daylight. The air trembled with a fresh breeze, the birds sang, and everything awoke to life again.

But the young girl had barely had sufficient time to look down over the main features of this wonderful landscape, when by a frequently recurring phenomenon in these cool parts of the world the mists arose and spread themselves in sheets, filling the valleys, and creeping up the slopes of the highest hills, concealing this fertile basin under a cloak like snow. Very soon Mlle. de Verneuil could have believed that she beheld a view of a *mer de glace*, such as the Alps furnish. Then this atmosphere of cloud surged like the waves of the sea, flinging up opaque billows which softly poised themselves, swayed or eddied violently, caught bright rosy hues from the shafts of sunlight, or showed themselves translucent here and there as a lake of liquid silver. Suddenly the north wind blew upon this phantasmagoria, and dispelled the mists, which left a rusty dew on the sward.

Mlle. de Verneuil could then see a huge brown patch, situated on the rocks of Fougères—seven or eight hundred armed Chouans were hurrying about in the suburb of St. Sulpice, like ants on an anthill. The immediate neighborhood of the castle was being furiously attacked by three thousand men who were stationed there, and who seemed to have sprung up by magic. The sleeping town would have yielded, despite its venerable ramparts and hoary old towers, if Hulot had not been on the watch. A concealed battery on a height, in the midst of the hollow basin formed by the ramparts, answered the Chouans' first volley, taking them in flank upon the road that led to the castle. The grapeshot cleared the road and swept it clean. Then a company made a sortie from the St. Sulpice gate, took advantage of the Chouans' surprise, drew themselves up upon the road, and opened a deadly fire upon them. The Chouans did not attempt to resist when they saw the ramparts covered with soldiers, as if the art of the engineer had suddenly traced blue lines about them, while the fire from the fortress covered that of the Republican sharpshooters.

Other Chouans, however, had made themselves masters of the little valley of the Nançon, had climbed the rocky galleries, and reached the promenade, to which they mounted till it was covered with goatskins, which made it look like the time-imbrowned thatch of a hovel. Loud reports were heard at that very moment from the quarter of the town that overlooks the Couesnon valley. Fougères was clearly surrounded, and attacked at all points. A fire which showed itself on the eastern side of the rock showed that the Chouans were even burning the suburbs; but the flakes of fire that sprang up from the shingle roof or the broom-thatch soon ceased, and a few columns of dark smoke showed that the conflagration was extinguished.

Black and brown clouds once more hid the scene from Mlle. de Verneuil, but the wind soon cleared away the smoke of the powder. The Republican commandant had already changed the direction of his guns, so that they could bear

successively upon the length of the valley of the Nançon, upon the Queen's Staircase, and the rock itself, when from the highest point of the promenade he had seen his first orders admirably carried out. Two guns by the guardhouse of St. Leonard's Gate were mowing down the antlike swarms of Chouans who had seized that position, while the National Guard of Fougères, precipitating themselves into the square by the church, were completing the defeat of the enemy. The affair did not last half an hour, and did not cost the Blues a hundred men. The Chouans, discomfited and defeated, were drawing off already in all directions, in obedience to repeated orders from the Gars, whose bold stroke had come to nothing (though he did not know this) in consequence of the affair at the Vivetière, which had brought back Hulot in secret to Fougères. The artillery had only arrived there during this very night; for the mere rumor that ammunition was being transported thither would have sufficed to make Montauran desist from an enterprise, which, if undertaken, could only have a disastrous result.

As a matter of fact, Hulot had as much desire to give a severe lesson to the Gars as the Gars could have had to gain a success, in the moment he had selected, to influence the determinations of the First Consul. At the first cannon-shot the Marquis knew that it would be madness to carry this failure of a surprise any further from motives of vanity. So, to prevent a useless slaughter of his Chouans, he hastened to send out seven or eight messengers bearing orders to operate a prompt retreat at every point. The commandant, seeing his antagonist with a number of advisers about him, of whom Mme. du Gua was one, tried to send a volley over to them upon the rocks of St. Sulpice, but the place had been selected too cleverly for the young chief not to be in security. Hulot changed his tactics all at once from the defensive to the aggressive. At the first movements which revealed the intentions of the Marquis, the company which was posted beneath the walls of the castle set themselves to

work to cut off the Chouans' retreat by seizing the outlets at the upper end of the Nançon valley.

In spite of her animosity, Mlle. de Verneuil's sympathies were with the side on which her lover commanded. She turned quickly to see if the passage was free at the lower end. But she saw the Blues, who had no doubt been victorious on the other side of Fougères, returning from the Couesnon valley, through the dale of Gibarry, so as to seize the Nid-aux-Crocs, and that portion of the crags of St. Sulpice where the lower exits from the Nançon valley were situated. The Chouans, thus shut up in the narrow space of meadow at the bottom of the ravine, seemed certain to be cut off to a man; so accurately had the old Republican commandant foreseen the event, and so skilfully had he laid his plans. But the cannon, which had done Hulot such good service, were powerless upon either point. A desperate struggle began, and the town of Fougères once safe, the affair assumed the character of an engagement to which the Chouans were accustomed.

Then Mlle. de Verneuil understood the presence of the large bodies of men which she had come upon in the open country, the meeting of the chiefs in d'Orgemont's house, and all the occurrences of the previous night, and was unable to account for her escape from so many perils. This enterprise, suggested by despair, had so keen an interest for her that she stood motionless, watching the moving pictures that spread themselves beneath her eyes. The fighting that went on at the foot of the hills of St. Sulpice soon had yet another interest for her. When the Marquis and his friends saw that the Chouans were almost at the mercy of the Blues, they rushed to their assistance down the Nançon valley. The foot of the crags was covered with a crowd, composed of furious groups who were fighting out the issues of life and death—both the weapons and the ground being in favor of the goatskins. Imperceptibly the shifting battlefield expanded its limits. The Chouans scattered themselves and gained possession of the rocks, thanks to the help of the

shrubs which grew here and there. A little later Mlle. de Verneuil was startled by the sight of her foes once more upon the summits, where they strenuously defended the perilous footpaths by which they had come.

As every passage on the hill was now in the possession of one side or the other, she was afraid of finding herself in among them. She left the great tree behind which she had been standing, and took to flight, meaning to take advantage of the old miser's advice. After she had hastened for some time along the slope of the hills of St. Sulpice which overlooks the main valley of the Couesnon, she saw a cowshed in the distance, and concluded that it must be one of the outbuildings about Galope-Chopine's house, and that he must have left his wife by herself while the fighting went forward. Encouraged by these conjectures, Mlle. de Verneuil hoped to be well received in the dwelling, and to be allowed to spend a few hours there, until it should be possible to return to Fougères without danger. To all appearance, Hulot would gain the day. The Chouans were flying rapidly, so that she heard gunshots all about her, and the fear of being struck by a stray ball led her to reach the cottage, whose chimney served as a landmark, without delay. The path which she followed led to a sort of cart-shed. Its roof, thatched with broom, was supported by the trunks of four great trees which still retained their bark. There was a wall of daub and wattle at the back of it. In the shed itself there was a cider-press, a threshing-floor for buckwheat, and some plowing apparatus. She stopped short beside one of the posts, hesitating to cross the miry swamp that did duty for a yard before this house, which afar off, she, like a true Parisian, had taken for a cowshed.

The cabin, sheltered from the blasts of the north wind by a knoll that rose above its roof, and against which it was built, was not destitute of a certain poetry of its own, for saplings and heather and rock-flowers hung in wreaths and garlands about it. A rustic staircase contrived between the shed and the house allowed its inmates to ascend the heights

of the knoll to breathe the fresh air. To the left of the cabin the knoll fell away abruptly, so that a succession of fields was visible, the first of which belonged in all probability to this farm. A border of pleasant copse wood ran round these fields, which were separated by banks of earth, upon which trees had been planted. The nearest field completely surrounded the yard. The way thither was closed by the huge half-rotten trunk of a tree, a barrier peculiar to Brittany, called by a name which later on will furnish a final digression on the characteristics of the country. Between the staircase that had been cut in the rock, and the track which was closed by the great log, and beneath the overhanging rocks, stood the cottage, with the swamp before it. The four corners of the hovel were built of roughly hewn blocks of granite, laid one over another, thus maintaining the wretched walls in position. These were built up of a mixture of earthen bricks, beams of wood, and flintstones. Half of the roof was covered with broom, in the place of straw thatch, and the other half with shingles, or narrow boards cut in the shape of roofing slates, showing that the house consisted of two parts; and as a matter of fact, one part, divided off by a crazy hurdle, served as a byre, while the owners lived in the other division.

Owing to the near vicinity of the town, there were improvements about this cabin which would be completely lacking anywhere two leagues further away; and yet it showed very plainly the insecure condition of life to which wars and feudal customs had so rigorously subjected the habits of the serf that even to-day many of the peasants in these parts still call the chateau in which their landlords dwell the House.

Mlle. de Verneuil studied the place with an amazement that can readily be imagined, and at last she noticed a broken block of granite here and there in the mire of the yard, arranged to afford a method of access to the dwelling, not unattended with danger. But, hearing the sounds of musketry drawing appreciably nearer, she sprang from stone to

stone, as if she were crossing a river, to ask for shelter. Entrance to the house was barred by one of those doors that are made in two separate pieces; the lower part being of solid and substantial timber, while the upper portion was protected by a shutter, which served as a window. Shop-doors in certain little towns in France are often made on this model, but they are much more elaborate, and the lower portion is supplied with an alarm bell. The lower half of this particular door was opened by unfastening a wooden latchet worthy of the Golden Age, while the upper part was only closed during the night, since the daylight entered the room through no other opening. A rough sort of window certainly existed, but the panes were like bottle ends, and the massive leaden frames which supported them took up so much room that the window seemed to be intended rather to intercept the light than to afford a passage to it.

As soon as Mlle. de Verneuil had made the door turn on its creaking hinges, she encountered an alarming ammoniacal odor which issued in whiffs from the cottage, and saw how the cattle had kicked to pieces the partition wall that divided them from the house-place. So the inside of the farmhouse (for such it was) was quite in keeping with the outside. Mlle. de Verneuil was asking herself how it was possible that human beings should live in such confirmed squalor, when a tiny ragged urchin, who seemed to be about eight or nine years old, suddenly showed a fresh pink and white face, plump cheeks, bright eyes, ivory teeth, and fair hair that fell in tangled locks over his half-naked shoulders. His limbs were sturdy, and in his attitude there was the charm of wonder, and the wild simplicity that makes a child's eyes grow larger. The little lad's beauty was of the heroic order.

"Where is your mother?" said Marie in a gentle tone, as she stooped down to kiss his eyes.

After receiving the kiss the child slipped away like an eel and disappeared behind a manure heap which lay between the path and the house, upon the slope of the knoll. Galope-Chopine was wont, like many other Breton farmers (who

have a system of agriculture peculiar to them), to pile manure in high situations; so that by the time they come to use it, the rain has washed all the goodness out of it.

Marie, being left in possession of the cabin for some minutes, quickly made an inventory of its contents. The whole house consisted of the one room in which she was waiting for Barbette. The most conspicuous and pretentious object was a vast fireplace, the mantel-piece being made out of a single slab of blue granite. The etymology of the word "mantel-piece" was made apparent by a scrap of green serge, bordered with pale-green ribbon, and scalloped at the edges, which was hanging along the slab, in the midst of which stood a colored plaster cast of the Virgin. On the base of the statuette, Mlle. de Verneuil read a couple of lines of religious poetry which are very widely popular in the district:

"Protectress of this place am I,
The Mother of God who dwells on high."

Behind the Virgin there was a frightful picture splashed over with red and blue, a pretence of a painting that represented St. Labre. A bed covered with green serge, of the kind called tomb-shaped, a clumsy cradle, a wheel, some rough chairs, and a carved dresser, fitted up with a few utensils, almost completed the list of Galope-Chopine's furniture. Before the window there was a long table and a couple of benches made of chestnut wood; the light that fell through the panes of glass gave them the deep hues of old mahogany. Beneath the bunghole of a great hogshead of cider Mlle. de Verneuil noticed a patch of moist yellowish thick deposit. The dampness was corroding the floor, although it was made of blocks of granite set in red clay, and proved that the master of the abode had come honestly by his Chouan nickname.[1]

Mlle. de Verneuil raised her eyes to avoid this sight, and

[1] Galope-Chopine, literally, Toss-pot.—Translator's note.

it seemed to her forthwith that she had seen all the bats in the world—so numerous were the spiders' webs that hung from the beams. Two huge pitchers, filled with cider, were standing on the long table. These utensils are a sort of brown earthenware jug of a pattern which is still in use in several districts in France, and which a Parisian can imagine for himself by thinking of the pots in which epicures serve Brittany butter; but the body of the jug is rounder, the glaze is unevenly distributed, and shaded over with brown splashes, like certain shells. The pitcher ends in a mouth of a kind not unlike the head of a frog thrust out above the water to take the air. The two pitchers had attracted Marie's attention last of all; but the sound of the fight grew more and more distinct, and compelled her to look about for a suitable hiding-place without waiting for Barbette, when the latter suddenly appeared.

"Good-day, Bécanière," she said, repressing an involuntary smile at the sight of a face that rather resembled the heads which architects set, by way of ornament, in the centres of window arches.

"Aha! you come from d'Orgemont," answered Barbette with no particular eagerness.

"Where will you put me? For the Chouans are here—"

"There!" said Barbette, as much at a loss at the sight of the beauty as well as of the eccentric attire of a being whom she did not venture to include among her own sex. "There! In the priest's hole!"

She took her to the head of the bed, and put her between it and the wall; but both of them were thunderstruck just then, for they thought they could hear strange footsteps hurrying through the swamp. Barbette had scarcely time to draw one of the bed-curtains and to huddle Marie in it before she found herself face to face with a fugitive Chouan.

"Good-wife, where can one hide here? I am the Comte de Bauvan."

Mlle. de Verneuil trembled as she recognized the voice of the dinner guest, who had spoken the few words (still a

mystery for her) which had brought about the catastrophe at the Vivetière.

"Alas! monseigneur, you see there is nothing here! The best thing I can do is to go; but I will watch, and if the Blues are coming I will give you warning. If I were to stop here, and they found me with you, they would burn my house down."

So Barbette went out, for she had not wit enough to reconcile the opposing claims of two foes, each of whom had an equal right to the hiding-place, by virtue of the double part her husband was playing.

"I have two shots to fire," said the Count despairingly, "but they have gone past me already. Pshaw! I should be unlucky, indeed, if the fancy were to take them to look under the bed as they come back."

He gently leaned his gun against the bedpost, beside which Marie stood wrapped about with the green serge curtain. Then he stooped down to make quite sure that he could creep under the bed. He could not have failed to see the feet of the other refugee, who in the desperation of the moment snatched up his gun, sprang quickly out into the room, and threatened the Count with it. A peal of laughter broke from him, however, as he recognized her; for, in order to hide herself, Marie had taken off her enormous Chouan hat, and thick locks of her hair were escaping from beneath a sort of net of lace.

"Do not laugh, Count; you are my prisoner. If you make any movement, you shall know what an incensed woman is capable of."

Just as the Count and Marie were looking at each other with widely different feelings, confused voices were shouting among the rocks, "Save the Gars! Scatter yourselves! Save the Gars! Scatter yourselves!"

Barbette's voice rose above the uproar without, and was heard by the two foes inside the cottage with very different sensations, for she was speaking less to her own son than to them.

"Don't you see the Blues?" Barbette cried tartly. "Come here, you naughty little lad, or I will go after you! Do you want to get shot? Come, run away, quickly."

While all these small events were rapidly taking place, a Blue dashed into the swamp.

"Beau-Pied!" called Mlle. de Verneuil.

At the sound of her voice Beau-Pied ran up and took a somewhat better aim at the Count than his liberatress had done.

"Aristocrat," said the waggish soldier, "do not stir, or I will bring you down like the Bastille, in a brace of shakes."

"Monsieur Beau-Pied," said Mlle. de Verneuil in persuasive tones, "you are answerable to me for this prisoner. Do it in your own way, but you must deliver him over to me at Fougères safe and sound."

"Enough, madame!"

"Is the way to Fougères clear by now?"

"It is safe, unless the Chouans come to life again."

Mlle. de Verneuil cheerfully equipped herself with the light fowling-piece, gave her prisoner an ironical smile as she remarked, "Good-by, Monsieur le Comte, we shall meet again!" and went swiftly up the pathway, after putting on her great hat again.

"I am learning a little too late," said the Comte de Bauvan bitterly, "that one should never jest concerning the honor of women who have none left."

"Aristocrat," cried Beau-Pied with asperity, "say nothing against that beautiful lady, if you do not wish me to send you to your *ci-devant* paradise."

Mlle. de Verneuil returned to Fougères by the paths which connect the crags of St. Sulpice with the Nid-aux-Crocs. When she reached these latter heights and hastened along the winding track which had been beaten out over the rough surface of the granite, she admired the lovely little Nançon valley, but lately so full of tumult, now so absolutely peaceful. Seen from that point of view, the glen looked like a green alley. Mlle. de Verneuil returned by

way of St. Leonard's Gate, where the narrow path came to an end.

The townspeople were still in anxiety about the struggle; which, judging by the firing that they heard in the distance, seemed likely to last through the day. They were awaiting the return of the National Guard to know the full extent of their losses. When this girl appeared in her grotesque costume, with her hair dishevelled, a gun in her hand, her dress and shawl drenched with dew, soiled by contact with walls, and stained with mud, the curiosity of the people of Fougères was all the more vividly excited since the authority, beauty, and eccentricity of the fair Parisian already furnished the stock subject of their conversation.

Francine had sat up all night waiting for her mistress, a prey to horrible misgivings, so that on her return she wished to talk, but silence was enjoined upon her by a friendly gesture.

"I am not dead, child," said Marie. "Ah! when I left Paris I longed for emotions—and I have had them," she added after a pause. Francine went out to order a meal, remarking to her mistress that she must be in great need of it.

"Oh, no," said Mlle. de Verneuil, "but a bath, a bath! The toilet before everything else."

It was with no small degree of astonishment that Francine heard her mistress asking for the most fashionable and elegant dresses that had been packed for her.

After her breakfast, Marie made her toilet with all the minute care and attention that a woman devotes to this most important operation, when she is to appear before the eyes of her beloved in the midst of a ballroom. Francine could not account in any way for her mistress's mocking gayety. There was none of the joy of love in it—no woman can make a mistake as to that expression—there was an ill-omened and concentrated malice about her. With her own hands Marie arranged the curtains about the windows, through which her eyes beheld a magnificent view. Then she drew the sofa nearer to the fire, set it in a light favorable to her face, and

bade Francine bring flowers, so as to impart a festival appearance to the room. When Francine had brought the flowers, Marie superintended her arrangement of them to the best advantage. After casting a final glance of satisfaction round her apartment, she ordered Francine to send some one to demand her prisoner of the commandant.

She lay back luxuriously upon the sofa, partly to rest herself, and partly in order to assume a graceful and languid pose, which in certain women exerts an irresistible fascination. There was an indolent softness about her; the tips of her feet scarcely escaped from beneath the folds of her dress in a provoking manner; the negligence of her attitude, the bend of her neck—everything, down to the curves of her slender fingers that drooped over a cushion like the bells of a spray of jessamine, was in unison with her glances, and possessed an attractive influence. She burned perfumes so that the air was permeated with the sweet fragrance that acts so powerfully on the nerves, and frequently prepares the way for conquests which women desire to make without any advance on their part. A few moments later the heavy tread of the old commandant was heard in the antechamber.

"Well, commandant, where is my captive?"

"I have just ordered out a picket of a dozen men to shoot him, as he was taken with arms in his hands."

"You have disposed of my prisoner!" said she. "Listen, commandant. If I read your countenance rightly, there can be no great satisfaction for you in the death of a man after the engagement is over. Very well, then; give me back my Chouan, and grant him a reprieve. I will take the responsibility upon myself. I must inform you that this aristocrat has become indispensable to me, and with his co-operation our projects will be accomplished. Moreover, it would be as ridiculous to shoot this amateur Chouan as to fire on a balloon, for the prick of a pin is all that is needed to bring about its entire collapse. Leave butchery to the aristocrats, for heaven's sake. Republics should show themselves to be magnanimous. Would not you yourself have granted an

amnesty to the victims at Quiberon and to many others? Now, then, send your dozen men to make the rounds, and come and dine with me and my prisoner. There is only an hour of daylight left, and you see," she added smiling, "that if you delay my toilet will lose all its effect."

"But, mademoiselle—" said the astonished commandant.

"Well, what is it? I understand you. Come, the Count will not escape you. Sooner or later the portly butterfly yonder will scorch himself beneath the fire of your platoons."

The commandant slightly shrugged his shoulders, like a man who is compelled to submit, against his own judgment, to the whims of a pretty woman. He returned in the space of half an hour, followed by the Comte de Bauvan.

Mlle. de Verneuil made as though her two guests had taken her by surprise, and appeared to be in some confusion at being detected by the Count in so careless an attitude; but when she had seen, from that gentleman's eyes, that a first effect had been produced upon him, she rose and gave her whole attention to her visitors with perfect politeness and grace. There was nothing either constrained or studied in her attitude, in her smile, her voice or her manner, nothing that betrayed a premeditated design. Everything about her was in agreement; there was no touch of exaggération which could give an impression that she was assuming the manners of a world with which she was not familiar.

When the Royalist and the Republican were both seated, she looked at the Count with an expression of severity. The nobleman understood women sufficiently well to know that the affront that he had offered to her was like to be his own death-warrant. But in spite of this misgiving, and without showing either melancholy or levity, he behaved like a man who did not look for such a sudden catastrophe. It soon appeared to him that there was something ridiculous about fearing death in the presence of a pretty woman, and Marie's severe looks had put some ideas into his head.

"Eh!" thought he. "Who knows whether a Count's coronet still to be had will not please her better than the

coronet of a Marquis which has been lost? Montauran is as hard as a nail, while I—" and he looked complacently at himself. "At any rate, if I save my life, that is the least that may come of it."

These diplomatic reflections were all to no purpose. The *penchant* which the Count intended to feign for Mlle. de Verneuil became a violent fancy, which that dangerous being was pleased to encourage.

"You are my prisoner, Count," she said, "and I have the right to dispose of you. Your execution will only take place with my consent; and I have too much curiosity to allow you to be shot at once."

"And suppose that I maintain an obstinate silence?" he answered merrily.

"With an honest woman perhaps you might, but with a light one! Come now, Count, that is impossible."

These words, full of bitter irony, were hissed at him "from so sharp a whistle" (to quote Sully's remark concerning the Duchess of Beaufort) that the astonished noble could find nothing better to do than to gaze at his cruel opponent.

"Stay," she went on with a satirical smile, "not to gainsay you, I will be a 'good girl,' like one of those creatures. Here is your gun, to begin with," and she held out his weapon to him with mock amiability.

"On the faith of a gentleman, mademoiselle, you are doing—"

"Ah!" she broke in, "I have had enough of 'the faith of a gentleman!' On that security I set foot in the Vivetière. Your chief swore that I and mine should be in safety—"

"What infamy!" exclaimed Hulot with a scowl.

"It is the Count here who is to blame," she said, addressing Hulot, and indicating the noble. "The Gars certainly intended to keep his word; but this gentleman put some slander or other in circulation, which confirmed the stories which it had pleased Charette's Filly to imagine about me."

"Mademoiselle," said the Count in dire distress, with the

axe hanging over him, "I will swear that I said nothing but the truth—"

"And what did you say?"

"That you had been the—"

"Speak out! The mistress?"

"Of the Marquis of Lenoncourt, the present Duke, and a friend of mine," the Count made answer.

"Now, I might let you go to your death," said Marie, who was apparently unmoved by the Count's circumstantial accusation. The indifference, real or feigned, with which she regarded its opprobrium amazed the Count. "But," she continued, laughing, "you can dismiss forever the ominous vision of those leaden pellets, for you have no more given offence to me than to that friend of yours to whom you are pleased to assign me as—fie on you! Listen to me, Count, did you never visit my father, the Duc de Verneuil?—Very well then—"

Considering, doubtless, that the confidence which she was about to make was so important that Hulot must be excluded from it, Mlle. de Verneuil beckoned the Count to her, and whispered a few words in his ear. A stifled exclamation of surprise broke from M. de Bauvan; he looked at Marie in a bewildered fashion; she was leaning quietly against the chimney-piece, and the childish simplicity of her attitude suddenly brought back the whole of the memory which she had partially called up. The Count fell on one knee.

"Mademoiselle," he cried, "I entreat you to grant my pardon, although I may not deserve it."

"I have nothing to forgive," she said. "You are as irrational now in your repentance as you were in your insolent conjectures at the Vivetière. But these mysteries are above your intelligence. Only," she added gravely, "you must know this, Count, that the daughter of the Duc de Verneuil has too much magnanimity not to feel a lively interest in your fortunes."

"Even after an insult?" said the Count, with a sort of remorse.

"Are there not some who dwell so high that they are above the reach of insult? I am of their number, Count."

The dignity and pride in the girl's bearing as she uttered these words impressed her prisoner, and made this affair considerably more obscure for Hulot. The commandant's hand travelled to his mustache, as though to turn it up at the ends, while he looked on uneasily. Mlle. de Verneuil gave him a significant glance, as if to assure him that she was not deviating from her plan.

"Now, let us have some talk," she went on, after a pause. "Bring us some lights, Francine, my girl."

Skilfully she turned the conversation on the times, which, in the space of so few years, had come to be the *ancien régime.* She carried the Count back to those days so thoroughly, by the keenness of her observations and the vivid pictures she called up; she gave him so many opportunities of displaying his wit, by conducting her own replies with dexterous and gracious tact, that the Count ended by making the discovery that never before had he been so agreeable. He grew young again at the thought, and endeavored to communicate his own good opinion of himself to this attractive young person. The mischievous girl amused herself by trying all her arts of coquetry upon the Count, doing this all the more dexterously, because, for her, it was only a game. Sometimes she led him to believe that he was making rapid progress in her regard; sometimes she appeared to be taken aback by the warmth of her own feelings; and displayed, in consequence, a reserve that fascinated the Count, and which visibly helped to fan his extemporized flame. She behaved exactly like an angler who lifts his rod from time to time to see if the fish is nibbling at the bait. The poor Count allowed himself to be caught by the innocent way in which his deliverers received two or three rather neatly turned compliments. Emigration, the Republic, and the Chouans were a thousand leagues away from his thoughts.

Hulot sat bolt upright, motionless and pensive as the god Terminus. His want of education made him totally

unapt at this kind of conversation. He had a strong suspicion that the two speakers must be a very witty pair; but the efforts of his own intellect were confined to ascertaining that their ambiguous words contained no plotting against the Republic.

"Montauran, mademoiselle," the Count was saying, "is well born and well bred; he is a pretty fellow enough; but he understands nothing of gallantry. He is too young to have seen Versailles. His education has been deficient; he does not play off one shrewd turn with another; he gives a stab with the knife instead. He can fall violently in love, but he will never attain to that fine flower of manner which distinguished Lauzun, Adhémar, Coigny, and so many others. He has no idea of the agreeable art of saying to women those pretty nothings, which are better suited to them, after all, than outbursts of passion, which they very soon find wearisome. Yes, although he may have made conquests, he has neither grace nor ease of manner."

"I saw that clearly," Marie replied.

"Ah!" said the Count to himself, "there was a note in her voice and a look that shows that it will not be long before I am on the best of terms with her; and faith! I will believe anything she wishes me to believe, in order to be hers."

Dinner was served; he offered his arm. Mlle. de Verneuil did her part as hostess with a politeness and tact which could only have been acquired by an education received in the exclusive life of a court.

"Leave us," she said to Hulot, as they left the table, "he is afraid of you; while, if I am left alone with him, I shall very soon learn everything that I wish to know; he has reached the point when a man tells me everything that he thinks, and sees things only through my eyes."

"And after that?" asked the commandant, who seemed thus to reassert his claim to the prisoner.

"Oh! he will go free," she said, "free as the air."

"But he was taken with arms in his hands—"

"No, he was not," said she, "for I had disarmed him," a jesting sophistry such as women love to oppose to sound but arbitrary reasoning.

"Count," she said, as she came in again, "I have just obtained your freedom; but nothing for nothing!" she went on, smiling, and turning her head questioningly to one side.

"Ask everything of me that you will, even my name and my honor!" he cried, in his intoxication, "I lay it all at your feet." And he came near to seize her hand, in his endeavor to impose his desires upon her as gratitude, but Mlle. de Verneuil was not a girl to make a mistake of this kind. So, while she smiled upon this new lover, so as to give him hope—"Will you make me repent of my confidence in you?" she said, drawing back a step or two.

"A girl's imagination runs faster than a woman's," he answered, laughing.

"A girl has more to lose than a woman."

"True, if one carries a treasure, one must needs be suspicious."

"Let us leave this kind of talk," she answered, "and speak seriously. You are giving a ball at Saint James. I have heard that you have established your magazines there, and your arsenals, and made it the seat of your government. When is the ball?"

"To-morrow night."

"It will not astonish you, sir, that a slandered woman should wish, with feminine persistency, to obtain a signal reparation for the insults to which she has been subjected, and this in the presence of those who witnessed them. So I will go to your ball. What I ask of you is to grant me your protection from the moment of my arrival to the moment of my departure. I do not want your word for it," she said, seeing that he laid his hand on his heart. "I hold vows in abhorrence; they seem to me too like precautions. Simply tell me that you undertake to secure me against any infamous and criminal attempts upon my person. Promise to repair your own error by giving out everywhere that I am

really the daughter of the Duc de Verneuil; keeping silence, at the same time, about the misfortunes which I owe to the lack of a father's protecting care; and then we shall be quits. Eh! Can a couple of hours' protection extended to a woman in a ballroom be too heavy a ransom? Come, come, you are not worth a penny more than that," and a smile deprived her words of any bitterness.

"What will you demand for my gun?" laughed the Count.

"Oh! more than I do for you yourself."

"What is it?"

"Secrecy. Believe me, Bauvan, only a woman can read another woman. I am positive that if you breathe a word of this, I may lose my life on the way thither. One or two balls yesterday warned me of the risks which I must encounter on the journey. Oh! that lady is as expert with a rifle as she is dexterous in assisting at the toilet. No waiting-woman ever undressed me so quickly. Pray manage things so that I may have nothing of that kind to fear at the ball."

"You will be under my protection," the Count replied proudly. "But perhaps it is for Montauran's sake that you are coming to Saint James?"

"You wish to know more than I do myself," she said, laughing. "You must go, now," she added, after a pause. "I myself will be your conductor until you are out of the town, for you have made the war one of cannibals, here."

"But you take some interest in me," cried the Count. "Ah! mademoiselle, allow me to hope that you will not be insensible to my friendship; for I must be content with that, must I not?" he added, with the air of a coxcomb.

"Come now, conjurer!" she said, with the blithe expression that a woman can assume when she makes an admission that neither betrays her real feelings nor compromises her dignity. She put on her pelisse, and went with the Count as far as the Nid-aux-Crocs. When they reached the beginning of the footpath, she said—"Maintain an absolute re-

serve, sir, even with the Marquis," and she laid a finger on her lips. The Count, emboldened by Mlle. de Verneuil's graciousness, took her hand; she suffered him to do so, like one who grants a great privilege, and he kissed it tenderly.

"Oh, mademoiselle," he cried, when he saw that he was quite out of danger, "you can reckon upon me through life and death! Since I owe you a debt of gratitude almost as great as that which I owe to my own mother, it will be very hard to feel nothing more than esteem for you."

He sprang down the pathway. Marie watched him as he scaled the crags of St. Sulpice, and nodded approvingly, as she murmured to herself—"That fine fellow yonder has paid me for his life more than the worth of his life. I could make him my creature at a very small cost! A creature and a creator! There lies the whole difference between one man and another!" She went no further with her thought. She gave a despairing look at the sky above her, and slowly returned to St. Leonard's Gate, where Hulot and Corentin were waiting for her.

"Yet two more days," she cried; then she checked herself, seeing that they were not alone, and whispered the rest in Hulot's ear—"and he shall drop down beneath your fire."

With a peculiar jocose expression not easy to describe, the commandant suddenly drew back a step and looked at the girl before him—there was not a shadow of remorse in her face or bearing. It is wonderful how women, generally speaking, never reason over their most blameworthy actions; they are led entirely by their feelings; there is a kind of sincerity in their very dissimulation, and only among women is crime dissociated from baseness; for, for the most part, they themselves do not know how the thing has come about.

"I am going to Saint James, to a ball given by the Chouans, and—"

"But that is five leagues away from here," Corentin put in. "Shall I escort you?"

"You are very much taken up," said she, "with some-

thing that I never think about at all—that is to say, yourself."

The contempt for Corentin which Marie had displayed was eminently gratifying to Hulot, who made his peculiar grimace as he watched her disappear in the direction of St. Leonard. Corentin's eyes likewise followed her; but from his face it was evident that he suppressed the consciousness of a superior power which he thought to exercise over this charming woman's destiny; he meant so to control her by means of her passions that one day she should be his.

Mlle. de Verneuil, on her return, betook herself at once to considering her ball dress. Francine, quiet accustomed to obedience, though she did not understand the ends which her mistress had in view, ransacked the trunks, and suggested a Greek costume. Everything at that time took its tone from ancient Greece. This toilet, which received Marie's approval, could be packed in a trunk that could easily be carried.

"I am setting out on a wild errand, Francine, child; think whether you would rather stay here or go with me?"

"Stay here!" cried Francine; "if I did, who would dress you?"

"Where have you put the glove that I gave you this morning?"

"Here it is!"

"Sew a bit of green ribbon upon it; and before all things, do not forget to take some money."

But when she saw that Francine had newly coined money in her hand, she exclaimed, "That in itself would be the death of us! Send Jeremiah to arouse Corentin. . . . No, the villain would follow us! It would be better to send to the commandant to ask him for some crowns of six francs each, for me."

Marie thought of everything down to the smallest detail, with a woman's foresight. While Francine completed the preparations for her incomprehensible journey, she occupied herself with trying to imitate the cry of the screech owl, and

succeeded in imitating Marche-a-Terre's signal in a manner that baffled detection. At midnight she passed out through St. Leonard's Gate, reached the narrow footpath along the Nid-aux-Crocs; and, with Francine following her, she ventured across the dale of Gibarry. She walked with a firm step; for so strong a will as that which stirred within her invests the body and its movements with an indescribable quality of power. For women, the problem how to leave a ballroom without catching a cold is of no small importance; but when their hearts are once possessed by passion, their frames might be made of iron. Even a bold man would have hesitated over such an enterprise; but scarcely had Mlle. de Verneuil begun to feel the attractions of the prospect, when its dangers became so many temptations for her.

"You are setting out without a prayer for God's protection," said Francine, who had turned to look at St. Leonard's spire.

The devout Breton girl stopped, clasped her hands, and said her *Ave* to St. Anne of Auray, beseeching her to prosper their journey, while her mistress stood waiting, deep in thought, gazing alternately at the childlike attitude of her maid, who was praying fervently, and at the effects of the misty moonlight, as it fell over the carved stone-work about the church, giving to the granite the look of delicate filigree.

In no long time the two women reached Galope-Chopine's cottage. Light as were the sounds of their footsteps, they aroused one of the huge dogs that, in Brittany, are intrusted with the safe-keeping of the door, a simple wooden latch being the only fastening in vogue. The dog made a rush at the two strangers, and his bark became so furious that they were compelled to retreat a few paces and to call for help. Nothing stirred, however. Mlle. de Verneuil gave the cry of the screech-owl, and then the rusty hinges of the cabin-door creaked loudly all at once, and Galope-Chopine, who had risen in haste, showed his gloomy countenance.

Marie held out Montauran's glove for the inspection of the warden of Fougères.

"I must go to Saint James at once," she said. "The Comte de Bauvan told me that I should find a guide and protector in you. So find two donkeys for us to ride, my worthy Galope-Chopine, and prepare to come with us yourself. Time is valuable; for if we do not reach Saint James before to-morrow evening, we shall neither see the Gars nor the ball."

Galope-Chopine, utterly amazed, took the glove and turned it over and over. Then he lighted a candle made of resin, about the thickness of the little finger and the color of gingerbread. This commodity had been imported from the north of Europe, and, like everything else in this strange land of Brittany, plainly showed the prevailing ignorance of the most elementary principles of commerce. When Galope-Chopine had seen the green ribbon, taken a look at Mlle. de Verneuil, scratched his ear, and emptied a pitcher of cider, after offering a glass to the fair lady, he left her seated upon the bench of polished chestnut wood before the table, and went in search of two donkeys.

The violet rays of the outlandish candle were hardly strong enough to outshine the fitful moonlight, that gave vague outlines in dots of light to the dark hues of the furniture, and to the floor of the smoke-begrimed hut. The little urchin had raised his pretty, wondering face; and up above his fair curls appeared the heads of two cows, their pink noses and great eyes shone through the holes in the wall of the byre. The big dog, whose head was by no means the least intelligent one in this family, seemed to contemplate the two strangers with a curiosity quite as great as that displayed by the child. A painter would have dwelt admiringly on the effect of this nightpiece, but Marie was not very eager to enter into conversation with the spectre-like Barbette, who was now sitting up in bed, and had begun to open her eyes very wide with recognition. Marie went out to avoid the pestiferous atmosphere of the hovel, and to escape the questions which the "Bécanière" was about to ask.

She tripped lightly up the flight of stairs cut in the rock which overhung Galope-Chopine's cottage, and thence admired the endless detail of the landscape before her, which underwent a change at every step, whether backward or forward, toward the crests of the hills or down to the depths of the valleys. Moonlight was spreading like a luminous mist far and wide over the valley of the Couësnon. A woman who carried a burden of slighted love in her heart could not but experience the feeling of melancholy that this soft light produces in the soul—a light that lent fantastic outlines to the mountain forms, and traced out the lines of the streams in strange pale tints.

The silence was broken just then by the bray of the asses. Marie hurried down to the Chouan's cabin, and they set out at once. Galope-Chopine, armed with a double-barrelled fowling-piece, wore a shaggy goatskin which gave him the appearance of a Robinson Crusoe. His wrinkled and blotched countenance was barely visible beneath his huge hat, an article of dress to which the peasants still cling, in pride at having obtained, after all their long ages of serfdom, a decoration sacred to the heads of their lords in times of yore. There was something patriarchal about the costume, attitude, and form of their guide and protector; the whole nocturnal procession resembled the picture of "The Flight into Egypt" which we owe to the sombre brush of Rembrandt. Galope-Chopine industriously avoided the highway, and led the two women through the vast labyrinth made by cross-country roads in Brittany.

By this time Mlle. de Verneuil understood the tactics of the Chouans in war. As she herself went over these tracks, she could form a more accurate notion of the nature of the country which had appeared so enchanting to her when she viewed it from the heights; a country presenting dangers and wellnigh hopeless difficulties, which must be experienced before any idea can be formed concerning them. The peasants, from time immemorial, have raised a bank of earth about each field, forming a flat-topped ridge, six feet in

height, with beeches, oaks, and chestnut trees growing upon the summit. The ridge or mound, planted in this wise, is called "a hedge" (the kind of hedge they have in Normandy); and as the long branches of the trees which grow upon it almost always project across the road, they make a great arbor overhead. The roads themselves, shut in by clay banks in this melancholy way, are not unlike the moats of fortresses; and whenever the granite, which is nearly always just beneath the surface in these districts, does not form an uneven natural pavement, the ways become so excessively heavy that the lightest cart can only travel over them with the help of two yoke of oxen and a couple of horses; they are small horses, it is true, but generally strong. So chronic is the swampy state of the roads that, by dint of use and wont, a path called a *rote* has been beaten out for foot passengers along the side of the hedge in each field. The necessary transition from one field to another is effected by climbing a few steps cut in the bank side, which are often slippery in wet weather.

The travellers found other obstacles in abundance to be surmounted in these winding lanes. Each separate piece of land, fortified in the way that has been described, possesses a gateway some ten feet wide, which is barred across by a contrivance called an *échalier* in the West. The *échalier* is either a trunk or a limb of a tree, with a hole drilled through one end of it, so that it can be set on another shapeless log of wood which serves, as it were, for a handle or pivot upon which the first piece is turned. The thick end of the *échalier* is so arranged as to project some distance behind this pivot, so that it can carry a heavy weight as a counterpoise, a device that enables a child to open and close this curious rustic gate. The further end of the tree trunk lies in a hollow fashioned on the inner side of the bank itself. Sometimes the peasants thriftily dispense with the stone counterpoise, and let the thick end of the trunk or limb of the tree hang further over instead. This kind of barrier varies with the taste of every farmer. Very often the *échalier* consists

of one single branch of a tree, with either end ensconced in the earth of the bank. Often, again, it looks like a square gate, built up of many branches, set at intervals, as if the rungs of a ladder had been arranged crosswise. This kind of gate turns about like an *echalier*, and the other end moves upon a little revolving disk.

These "hedges" and *echaliers* make the land look like a vast chessboard. Every field is a separate and distinct inclosure like a fortress, and each, like a fortress, is protected by a rampart. The gateways are readily defended, and, when stormed, afford a conquest fraught with many perils. The Breton has a fancy that fallow land is made fertile by growing huge bushes of broom upon it; so he encourages this shrub, which thrives upon the treatment it receives to such an extent that it soon reaches the height of a man. This superstition is not unworthy of a population capable of depositing their heaps of manure on the highest points of their fold yards; and in consequence, one-fourth of the whole area of the land is covered with thickets of broom, affording hiding-places without number for ambuscades. Scarcely a field is without its one or two old cider-apple trees, whose low overhanging branches are fatal to the vegetation beneath. Imagine, therefore, how little of the field itself is left, when every hedge is planted with huge trees, whose greedy roots spread out over one-fourth of the space; and you will have some idea of the system of cultivation and general appearance of the country through which Mlle. de Verneuil was travelling.

It is not clear whether a desire to avoid disputes about landmarks, or the convenient and easy custom of shutting up cattle on the land with no one to look after them, brought about the construction of these redoubtable barriers—permanent obstacles which make the country impenetrable, and render a war with large bodies of troops quite impossible. When the nature of the land has been reviewed, step by step, the hopelessness of a struggle between regular and irregular troops is abundantly evident; for five hundred men

can hold the country in the teeth of the troops of a kingdom. This was the whole secret of Chouan warfare.

Mlle. de Verneuil now understood how pressing was the necessity that the Republic should stamp out rebellion rather by means of police and diplomacy than by futile efforts on the part of the military. As a matter of fact, what was it possible to effect against a people clever enough to despise the possession of their towns, while they secured the length and breadth of their land by such indestructible earthworks? And how do otherwise than negotiate, when the whole blind force of the peasants was concentrated in a wary and audacious chief? She admired the genius of the minister who had discovered the clew to a peace in the depths of his cabinet. She thought she had gained an insight into the nature of the considerations which sway men who have ability enough to see the condition of an empire at a glance. Their actions, which in the eyes of the crowd seem to be criminal, are but the partial manifestations of a single vast conception. There is about such awe-inspiring minds as these an unknown power which seems to belong half to chance and half to fate; a mysterious prophetic instinct within them beckons them, and they rise up suddenly; the common herd misses them for a moment from among its numbers, raises its eyes, and beholds them soaring on high. These thoughts seemed to justify, nay, to exalt Mlle. de Verneuil's longings for revenge; her hopes and the thoughts that wrought within her lent to her sufficient strength to endure the unwonted fatigues of her journey. At the boundary of every freehold Galope-Chopine was compelled to assist the two women to dismount, and to help them to scramble over the awkward interval, and when the *rotes* came to an end they were obliged to mount again and venture into the miry lanes which the approach of winter had already affected. The huge trees, the hollow ways, and the barriers in these low-lying meadows, all combined to shut in a damp atmosphere that surrounded the three travellers like an icy pall. After much painful fatigue they reached the woods of Marignay at sunrise. Their

way became easier along a broad forest ride. The thick vault of branches overhead protected them from the weather, and they encountered no more of the difficulties which had hitherto impeded them.

They had scarcely gone a league through the forest, when they heard a confused far-off murmur of voices and the silvery sounds of a bell, ringing less monotonously than those which are shaken by the movements of cattle. Galope-Chopine hearkened to the soft sounds with keen attention. Very soon a gust of the breeze bore the words of a psalm to his ear. This seemed to produce a great effect upon him; he led the weary donkeys aside into a track which took the travellers away from the direct road to Saint James, turning a deaf ear to the remonstrances of Mlle. de Verneuil, whose uneasiness was increased by the gloomy condition of the place. Enormous blocks of granite, with the strangest outlines, lay to right and left of them, piled one above another. Huge serpent-like roots wandered over these rocks, seeking moisture and nourishment afar for some few venerable beeches. Both sides of the road looked like the huge caves which are famous for their stalactites. Ravines and cavern-mouths were hidden by festoons of ivy; the sombre green of the holly thickets mingled with the brackens and with green or grayish patches of moss. The travellers had not taken many steps along this narrow track when a most amazing scene suddenly spread itself before Mlle. de Verneuil's eyes, and explained Galope-Chopine's pertinacity.

A kind of cove rose before them, built up of huge masses of granite, forming a semi-circular amphitheatre. Tall dark firs and golden brown chestnut trees grew on its irregular tiers, which rose one above another, as in a great circus. The winter sun seemed not so much to throw its light as to pour a flood of pale colors over everything, and autumn had spread a warm brown carpet of dry leaves everywhere. In the very centre of this hall, which seemed to have had the Deluge for its architect, rose three giant Druidical stones, a great altar above which the banner of the church

was set. Some hundred men, in fervent prayer, knelt, bareheaded, in this inclosure, where a priest, assisted by two other ecclesiastics, was saying mass. The poverty of the sacerdotal garb, the weak voice of the priest, which echoed like a murmur in space, the crowd of men filled with conviction, united by one common feeling, bending before the undecorated altar and the bare crucifix, the sylvan austerity of the temple, the hour and the place, lent this scene an appearance of simplicity which must have characterized early Christian gatherings.

Mlle. de Verneuil stood still in admiring awe. She had never before seen or imagined anything like this mass said in the heart of the forest, this worship which persecution had driven back to its primitive conditions, this poetry of the days of yore brought into sharp contrast with the strange and wild aspects of nature, these kneeling Chouans, armed or unarmed, at once men and children—at once cruel and devout. She recollected how often she had marvelled, in her childhood, at the pomps which this very Church of Rome has made so grateful to every sense; but she had never been brought thus face to face with the thought of God alone—His cross above the altar, His altar set on the bare earth; among the autumn woods that seemed to sustain the dome of the sky above, as the garlands of carved stone crown the archways of Gothic cathedrals; while, for the myriad colors of stained-glass windows, a few faint red gleams of sunlight and its duller reflections scarcely lighted up the altar, the priest, and his assistants.

The men before her were a fact, and not a system; this was a prayer, and not a theology. But the human passions which, thus restrained for a moment, had left the harmony of this picture undisturbed, soon reasserted themselves, and brought a powerful animation into the mysterious scene.

The gospel came to an end as Mlle. de Verneuil came up. She recognized, not without alarm, the Abbé Gudin in the officiating priest, and hastily screened herself from his observation behind a great fragment of granite, which made

a hiding-place for her. She also drew Francine quickly behind it, but in vain did she endeavor to tear Galope-Chopine away from the post which he had chosen with a view to sharing in the benefits of the ceremony. She hoped to effect an escape from the danger that threatened her when she saw that the nature of the ground would permit her to withdraw before all the rest of the congregation.

Through a large cleft in the rock she saw the Abbé Gudin take his stand upon a block of granite which served him for a pulpit, where he began his sermon with these words: "*In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus sancti.*"

The whole congregation devoutly made the sign of the Cross as he spoke.

"My dear brethren," the Abbé then began, in a loud voice, "first of all let us pray for the dead: for Jean Cochegrue, Nicolas Laferté, Joseph Brouet, François Parquoi, Sulpice Coupiau, all of this parish, who died of the wounds which they received in the fight at La Pèlerine and in the siege of Fougères." . . . *De profundis* and the psalm was recited, as their custom was, by the priests and congregation, who repeated alternate verses with an enthusiasm that augured well for the success of the sermon. When the psalm for the dead was over, the Abbé Gudin went on again in tones that grew more and more vehement; for the old Jesuit was well aware that an emphatic style of address was the most convincing form of argument by which to persuade his uncivilized audience.

"These defenders of God, Christian brethren, have set example of your duty before you," said he. "Are you not ashamed of what they may be saying of you in Paradise? Were it not for those blessed souls, who must have been welcomed there by the saints with open arms, our Lord might well believe that your parish is the abode of heathen Mahometans! Do you know, my gars, what is said about you in Brittany, and what the King is told of you? . . . You do not know, is not that so? I will tell you. They say: 'What is this? Altars have been overthrown by the

Blues; they have slain the rectors, they have murdered the King and Queen, they intend to take the men of every parish in Brittany, to make them Blues like themselves, and to send them away from their parishes to fight in far-off countries where they run the risk of dying unshriven, and, therefore, of spending eternity in hell. And are the gars of Marignay, whose church has been burned down, waiting with their arms hanging by their sides? Oho! This accursed Republic has sold the goods of God and of the seigneurs by auction, and divided the price among the Blues; and in order to batten itself on money as it has battened on blood, the Republic has issued a decree which demands three livres out of every crown of six francs, just as it demands three men out of every six; and the men of Marignay have not taken up their weapons to drive the Blues out of Brittany? Aha! Paradise will be shut against them, and they will never save their souls!' This is what people are saying about you. It is your own salvation, Christians, that is at stake! You will save your souls in the struggle for your faith and your king. St. Anne of Auray appeared to me herself yesterday at half-past two. She told me then just what I am telling you now. 'Thou art a priest from Marignay?'—'Yes, madame, at your service.'—'Very good, I am St. Anne of Auray, aunt of God, as we reckon in Brittany. I dwell at Auray, and I am come hither also, to bid thee tell the gars of Marignay that there is no hope of salvation for them if they do not take up arms. So thou shalt refuse to absolve them from their sins unless they serve God. Thou shalt bless their guns, and those gars who shall be absolved from their sins shall never miss the Blues, for their guns shall be holy!' She disappeared beneath the Goose-foot oak, leaving an odor of incense behind. I marked the spot. There is a beautiful wooden Virgin there, set up by the *recteur* of Saint James. Moreover, the mother of Pierre Leroi, who is called Marche-a-Terre, having repaired thither in the evening to pray, has been healed of her sufferings through the good works wrought by her

son. There she is in your midst; you can see her with your own eyes walking about without help from any one. It is a miracle, like the resurrection of the blessed Marie Lambrequin, wrought to prove to you that God will never forsake the cause of the Bretons so long as they fight for His servants and for the King.

"So, dear brethren, if you would save your souls and show yourselves to be defenders of our lord the King, you ought to obey him who has been sent to you by the King, and whom we call the Gars, in everything that he may command. Then you will no longer be like heathen Mahometans, and you will be found, with all the gars of all Brittany, beneath the banner of God. You can take back again, out of the Blues' pockets, all the money that they have stolen, for since your fields lie unsown while you go out to war, our Lord and the King make over to you all the spoils of your enemies. Christians, shall it be said of you that the gars of Marignay lag behind the gars of Morbihan, the gars of Saint-Georges, of Vitré or of Antrain, who are all in the service of God and the King? Will you allow them to take everything? Will you look on, like heretics, with folded arms, while so many Bretons are saving their own souls while they save their King? 'For Me, ye shall give up all things,' says the gospel. Have not we ourselves given up our tithes already? Give up everything to wage this sacred war! You shall be as the Maccabees, you will be pardoned at the last. You will find, in your midst, your rectors and your curés, and the victory will be yours! Christians, give heed to this!" said he as he drew to an end. "To-day is the only day on which we have the power of blessing your guns. Those who do not take advantage of this favor will never find the Blessed One of Auray so merciful at another time, and she will not hear them again, as she did in the last war."

This sermon, supported by the thunders of a powerful voice and by manifold gesticulations, which bathed the orator in perspiration, produced but little apparent affect. The peasants stood motionless as statues, with their eyes fixed on

the speaker; but Mlle. de Verneuil soon saw clearly that this universal attitude was the result of a spell which the Abbé exerted over the crowd. Like all great actors, he had swayed his audience as one man, by appealing to their passions and to their interests. Was he not absolving them beforehand for any excesses that they might commit? Had he not severed the few bonds that restrained these rough natures, and that kept them obedient to the precepts of religion and of social order? He had prostituted the priestly office to the uses of political intrigue; but in those revolutionary times, every one used such weapons as he possessed in the interests of his party, and the peace-bringing cross of Christ became an instrument of war, as did the plowshare that produces man's daily bread.

Mlle. de Verneuil saw no one who could understand her thoughts, so she turned to look at Francine, and was not a little amazed to find that her maid was sharing in the general enthusiasm. She was devoutly telling her beads on Galope-Chopine's rosary; he, no doubt, had made it over to her during the course of the sermon.

"Francine," she murmured, "are you also afraid of being a 'heathen Mahometan'?"

"Oh! mademoiselle," answered the Breton girl, "only look at Pierre's mother over yonder, she is walking—"

There was such deep conviction in Francine's attitude that Marie understood the secret spell of the sermon, the influence exercised by the clergy in the country, and the tremendous power of the scene which was just about to begin. Those peasants who stood nearest went up, one by one, kneeling as they offered their guns to the preacher, who laid them down upon the altar. Galope-Chopine lost no time in presenting himself with his old duck gun.

The three priests chanted the hymn "Veni Creator," while the officiating priest enveloped the instruments of death in a thick cloud of bluish smoke, describing a pattern of intertwining lines. When the light wind had borne away the fumes of incense, the guns were given out again in order.

Each man knelt to receive his weapon from the hands of the priests, who recited a prayer in Latin as they returned it to him. When every armed man had returned to his place, the intense enthusiasm (hitherto mute) which possessed the congregation broke out in a tremendous yet touching manner—"*Domine, salvum fac regem! . . .*"

This was the prayer that the preacher thundered forth in an echoing voice, and which was sung twice through with vehement excitement. There was something wild and warlike about the sounds of their voices. The two notes of the word *regem*, which the peasants readily comprehended, were taken with such passionate force that Mlle. de Verneuil could not prevent her thoughts from straying with emotion to the exiled family of Bourbons. These recollections awoke others of her own past life. Her memory brought back festive scenes at the court where she herself had shone conspicuous, a court now scattered abroad. The form of the Marquis glided into her musings. She forgot the picture before her eyes; and with the sudden transition of thought natural to women's minds, her scheme of vengeance recurred to her, a scheme for which she was about to risk her life, and yet a single glance might bring it to naught. She meditated how to appear at her best, at this supreme moment of her career, and remembered that she had no ornaments with which to deck her hair for this ball. A spray of holly at once attracted her attention, and the thought of a wreath of its curling leaves and scarlet berries carried her away.

"Aha!" said Galope-Chopine, wagging his head to show his satisfaction. "My gun may hang fire when I am after birds, but when I am after the Blues—never!"

Marie looked more closely at her guide's countenance, and saw that it was on the same pattern as all the others which she had just seen. There seemed to be fewer ideas expressed in the old Chouan's face than in that of a child. His cheeks and forehead were puckered with unconcealed joy as he looked at his gun; religious conviction had infused an element of fanaticism into his elation, so that, for a mo-

ment, the worst propensities of civilization seemed to be manifested in his barbarous features.

They very soon reached a village, that is to say, a collection of four or five dwellings like Galope-Chopine's own. Mlle. de Verneuil was finishing a breakfast, composed solely of bread and butter and dairy produce, when the newly recruited Chouans arrived. The *recteur* headed these irregular troops, bearing in his hands a rough crucifix transformed into a banner, and followed by a gars, who was full of pride at assisting to carry the parish standard. Mlle. de Verneuil perforce found herself included in this detachment, which was on its way to Saint James, and consequently protected from dangers of all kinds; for Galope-Chopine had been happily inspired to make an indiscreet avowal to the leader of the troop—how that the pretty *garce* whom he was escorting was a good friend to the Gars.

It was growing toward sunset when the three travellers reached Saint James, a little town which owes its name to the English, by whom it was built in the fourteenth century, during the time of their rule in Brittany. Before they entered it, Mlle. de Verneuil beheld a curious scene of warfare, to which she gave but little heed, for she was afraid that some of her enemies might recognize her, and the fear quickened her pace. Five or six thousand peasants were bivouacking in a field. There was no suggestion of war about their costumes, which were not unlike those of the requisitionaries on La Pèlerine; on the contrary, the disorderly assemblage of men resembled a huge hiring-fair. A careful scrutiny was required to ascertain whether or no the Bretons carried arms at all; for their guns were almost hidden by the goatskins of various patterns that they wore, and in many cases the most conspicuous weapons were the scythes with which they had replaced the muskets that had been distributed among them. Some were eating and drinking, some were brawling and fighting, but the greater number were lying asleep upon the ground. There was no sign or trace of order or of discipline. An officer in a red uniform

attracted Mlle. de Verneuil's attention; she thought that he must belong to the English army. Further on, two other officers appeared to be bent on teaching a few of the Chouans, who seemed to be quicker-witted than their fellows, how to handle a couple of cannon, of which the whole artillery of the future Royalist army appeared to consist.

The gars from Marignay were recognized by their standard, and welcomed with uproarious yells. Under cover of the bustle made in the camp by the arrival of the troop and its *recteurs*, Mlle. de Verneuil was able to make her way across it, and into the town, in safety. She reached an unpretending inn, at no great distance from the house where the ball was given. The town was so crowded with people that, after the greatest imaginable difficulty, she could only succeed in obtaining a wretched little room. When she had taken possession of it, and Galope-Chopine had given over the box that carried her mistress's costume into Francine's keeping, he stood waiting and hesitating in a manner that cannot be described. At any other time Mlle. de Verneuil would have been diverted by the spectacle of the Breton peasant out of his own parish; but now she broke the charm by drawing from her purse four crowns of six francs each, which she handed over to him.

"Take them!" said she to Galope-Chopine; "and if you wish to oblige me, you will return at once to Fougères without tasting cider, or passing through the camp."

The Chouan, in amazement at such open-handedness, was looking alternately at Mlle. de Verneuil and at the four crowns which he had received, but she dismissed him with a wave of the hand, and he vanished.

"How can you send him away, mademoiselle?" asked Francine. "Did you not see how the town is surrounded? How are we to leave it, and who will protect you here?"

"Have you not a protector of your own?" said Mlle. de Verneuil, with a low mocking whistle after the manner of Marche-a-Terre, whose ways she tried to mimic.

Francine blushed and smiled sadly at her mistress's high spirits.

"But where is *your* protector?" she said.

Mlle. de Verneuil rapidly drew out her dagger and showed it to the frightened Breton maid, who sank down into a chair and clasped her hands.

"What have you come to look for here, Marie?" she exclaimed; there was a note of entreaty in her voice which called forth no response. Mlle. de Verneuil was absorbed in bending and twisting the sprays of holly which she had gathered; she said—"I am not sure that the holly will look very pretty in my hair. Only a face as radiant as mine could bear such a sombre adornment. What do you think, Francine?"

Such remarks as this, made many times in the course of her toilet, showed that her mind was absolutely free from preoccupation. Any one who had overheard this strange girl would hardly have believed in the gravity of the crisis in which she was risking her life.

A somewhat short gown of Indian muslin revealed the delicate outlines of her figure, to which it clung like damp linen. Over this she wore a red overskirt, with innumerable drooping folds, that fell gradually lower and lower toward one side, thus preserving the graceful outlines of the Greek chiton. The sensuous beauty of this garb of a pagan priestess made the costume, a costume which the fashion of those days permitted women to wear, less indelicate; and, as a further palliation, Marie wound gauze about her white shoulders which the low lines of the tunic had left too bare. She knotted up the long locks of her hair at the back of her head in the irregular flattened cone that, by apparently adding length to the head, lends such charm to the faces of classical statues; reserving for her forehead a few long curls that fell on either side of her face in shining coils. Thus robed, and with her hair arranged thus, her resemblance to the greatest masterpieces of the Greek chisel was complete. She saw how every detail in the disposition of her hair set

off the loveliness of her face, with a smile that denoted her approval; then she crowned herself with the wreath of holly which she had twisted. The red color of her tunic was repeated in her hair with the happiest effect by the thick clusters of scarlet berries. As she twisted back a few of the leaves so as to secure a fanciful contrast between their upper and under sides, Mlle. de Verneuil flung a glance over herself in the mirror, criticising the general effect of her toilet.

"I am hideous to-night," she exclaimed, as though she had been surrounded by flatterers. "I look like a statue of Liberty."

She was careful to set her dagger in her corset, leaving the ruby-ornamented hilt protruding, so that the crimson gleams might draw the eye to the beauties which her rival had so unworthily profaned. Francine could not reconcile herself to parting from her mistress. When she was quite ready to start, the maid was ready to accompany her, finding an excuse in the difficulties that women necessarily encounter in going to a dance in a little town in Lower Brittany. Would she not be required to uncloak Mlle. de Verneuil, to take off the overshoes which the filthy condition of the streets had rendered imperative (albeit sand had been laid down), and to remove the gauze veil that her mistress had wound about her head, so as to screen herself from the curious eyes of the Chouans, who had been drawn by curiosity to surround the house where the dance was taking place? The crowd was so dense that they went between two hedges of Chouans. Francine no longer tried to keep her mistress back. After rendering the final necessary assistance demanded by a toilet in which unruffled freshness was a first requirement, she stayed on in the courtyard. She could not leave her mistress to the chances of fate without being at hand to fly to her assistance, for the poor Breton maid foresaw nothing but calamities.

A strange scene was taking place in Montauran's room at the time of Marie's arrival at the festival. The young Marquis was almost dressed, and was donning the broad red

ribbon that was to mark him out as the most important personage among those assembled, when the Abbé Gudin came in with an anxious face.

"Come quickly, my lord Marquis," said he. "You alone can calm the storm that has arisen among the chiefs. I do not know what it is all about. They are talking of withdrawing from the King's service. It is that devil of a Rifoël who is the cause of the trouble, I think. There is always some piece of foolery at the bottom of these disputes. They say that Mme. du Gua upbraided him for coming to the ball in an unsuitable dress."

"The woman must be crazy," exclaimed the Marquis, "to expect—"

"The Chevalier du Vissard," the Abbé went on, interrupting him, "retorted that if you had given him the money, promised to him in the King's name—"

"Enough, enough, Abbé! Now I understand everything. The scene had been got up beforehand, had it not? And you are their spokesman—"

"*I*, my lord Marquis?" the Abbe broke in with yet another interruption, "I will support you vigorously. I hope that you will believe, in fairness to me, that the prospect of the re-establishment of the altar throughout France, and of the restoration of the King to the throne of his forefathers, holds out far greater inducements to my humble efforts than that Archbishopric of Rennes which you—"

The Abbé dared not go any further, for at these words a bitter smile stole over the lips of the Marquis. But the young chief at once suppressed the gloomy reflections that occurred to him. With austere brows he followed the Abbé Gudin into a large room that echoed with vehement clamor.

"I own the authority of no one present," Rifoel was crying out. He flung fiery glances on those about him, and his hand was finding the way to the hilt of his sabre.

"Do you own the authority of common-sense?" asked the Marquis, coolly. The young Chevalier du Vissard, bet-

ter known by his patronymic of Rifoel, kept silence in the presence of the general of the Catholic armies.

"What is the matter now, gentlemen?" the young chief demanded, as he scanned the faces about him.

"The matter, my lord Marquis," replied a notorious smuggler—embarrassed at first like a man of the people who has long been overawed by the prestige of a great lord, but who loses all sense of restraint the moment that the boundary line that separates the pair has been overstepped, because thenceforth he regards him as their equal —"the matter is that you have come in the nick of time. I cannot talk in fine golden words, so I will put it roundly. I had five hundred men under me all through the last war, and since we have taken up arms again I have managed to find, for the King's service, a thousand heads quite as hard as my own. All along, for seven years past, I have been risking my life in the good cause; I do not blame you at all, but all work ought to be paid for. Therefore, to begin with, I wish to be called M. de Cottereau; and I wish to be requited by the rank of colonel, otherwise I shall offer my submission to the First Consul. My men and I, you see, my lord Marquis, are always dunned by a cursedly pressing creditor who must be satisfied. Here he is!" he added, striking his stomach.

"Have the fiddles arrived?" Montauran inquired of Mme. du Gua in caustic tones.

But the smuggler, in his brutal way, had opened up too all-important a question; and these natures, as calculating as ambitious, had been too long in suspense as to their prospects in the King's service for the scene to be cut short by the young leader's scorn. The young Chevalier du Vissard, in his heat and excitement, sprang to confront Montauran, and seized his hand to prevent him from turning away.

"Take care, my lord Marquis!" he said. "You are treating too lightly men who have some claim to the gratitude of him whom you represent here. We are aware that His Majesty has given you full power to recognize the services

we have rendered, which ought to be rewarded either in this world or in the next—for the scaffold is prepared for us daily. As for me, I am surc that the rank of maréchal de camp—"

"Of colonel, you mean?"

"No, my lord Marquis, Charette made me a colonel. My claim to the rank I have spoken of cannot be disputed. Still I am not urging my own claims just now in any way, but those of my dauntless brothers in arms, whose services stand in need of acknowledgment. Hitherto your promises and your personal guarantees have satisfied them"; he lowered his voice as he added, "and I must say that they are easily contented. But," and he raised his voice again, "when the sun shall rise at last in the Chateau of Versailles to shine upon the happy days of the monarchy to come, will all the King's faithful servants in France, who have aided the King to recover France, readily obtain his favor for their families? Will their widows receive pensions? Will their unfortunate losses of property through confiscation be made good to them? I doubt it. Therefore, my lord Marquis, will not indisputable proofs of past services be useful then? It is not that I ever shall mistrust the King himself, but I heartily mistrust thosc cormorants of ministers and courtiers about him, who will din a lot of trash into his ears about the public good, the honor of France, the interests of the crown, and a hundred more such things. They will make mock then of a loyal Vendean or a brave Chouan because he is aged, and because the old sword that once he drew for the good cause dangles against his legs, which are shrunken with sufferings. Can you blame us, Marquis?"

"You put it admirably, M. du Vissard; but you have spoken a little too soon," replied Montauran.

"Listen, Marquis," said the Comte de Bauvan in a low voice, "upon my word, Rifoel has told us some very true things. You yourself are always sure of access to the King's ear; but the rest of us can seldom go to see our

master. So I tell you frankly that if you do not pledge your word as a gentleman to obtain the post of Grand Master of the Rivers and Forests of France for me, when opportunity offers, the devil take me if I will risk my neck. It is no small task that I am set—to conquer Normandy for the King, so I hope to have the Order for it. But there is time yet to think about that," he added, blushing. "God forbid that I should follow the example of these wretches, and worry you. You will speak to the King for me, and there is an end of it."

Each of the chiefs by some more or less ingenious device found means to inform the Marquis of the extravagant reward which he expected for his services. One modestly asked for the Governorship of Brittany, another for a barony, one demanded promotion, and another a command; while one and all of them desired pensions.

"Well, Baron," the Marquis said, addressing M. du Guénic, "do you really wish for nothing?"

"Faith, Marquis, these gentlemen have left nothing for me but the crown of France; but I could readily manage to put up with that—"

"Gentlemen!" thundered the Abbé Gudin. "Consider this, that if you are so eager in the day of victory, you will spoil everything. Will not the King be compelled to make concessions to the Revolutionaries?"

"What! to the Jacobins!" exclaimed the smuggler. "Let the King leave that to me! I will undertake to set my thousand men to hang them, and we shall very soon be rid of them—"

"M. de Cottereau," said the Marquis, "I see that several invited guests are arriving. We must vie with each other in assiduity and zeal, so as to determine them to take part in our sacred enterprise. You understand that the present moment is not a time to consider your demands, even if they were just."

The Marquis went toward the door as he spoke, as if to welcome some nobles from the neighboring districts, of

whom he had caught sight, but the bold smuggler intercepted him deferentially and respectfully.

"No! no! my lord Marquise, excuse me, but in 1793 the Jacobins taught us too thoroughly that it is not the reaper who gets the bannock. If you put your name to this scrap of paper, I will bring you fifteen hundred gars to-morrow; otherwise, I shall treat with the First Consul."

The Marquis looked haughtily around, and saw that the onlookers at the debate regarded the audacity and resolution of the old free-lance with no unfavorable eyes. One man only, seated in a corner, appeared to take no part whatever in what was going on, but was employed in filling a white clay pipe with tobacco. The contempt that he visibly showed for the orators, his unassuming manner, and the commiseration for himself which the Marquis read in the man's eyes, made him look closely at this magnanimous adherent, in whom he recognized Major Brigaut. The chief went quickly up to him, and said—"How about *you?* What do you ask for?"

"Oh! my lord Marquis, if the King comes back again I shall be quite satisfied."

"But for you yourself?"

"For me? Oh! . . . You are joking, my lord."

The Marquis pressed the Breton's hard hand, and spoke to Mme. du Gua, by whom he was standing. "Madame, I may lose my life in this undertaking of mine before I have had time to send the King a faithful report of the Catholic armies in Brittany. If you should see the days of the Restoration, do not forget either this brave fellow or the Baron du Guénic. There is more devotion in these two than in all the other people here."

He indicated the chiefs who were waiting, not without impatience, till the youthful Marquis should comply with their demands. Papers were displayed in every hand, in which doubtless their services in previous wars had been recorded by Royalist generals; and one and all began to murmur. The Abbé Gudin, the Comte de Bauvan, and the

Baron du Guénic were taking counsel in their midst, as to the best means of assisting the Marquis to reject such extravagant claims, for in their opinion the young leader's position was a very difficult one.

There was a sarcastic light in the blue eyes of the Marquis as he suddenly gazed about him on those assembled, and spoke in clear tones—"Gentlemen, I do not know whether the powers which the King has vouchsafed to me are comprehensive enough to permit of my fulfilling your demands. He possibly did not foresee such zeal and such devotion as yours. You yourselves shall decide as to my duties, and perhaps I may be able to perform them."

He went and returned promptly with a letter lying open in his hand, ratified by the royal signature and seal.

"These are the letters patent by virtue of which you owe me obedience," said he. "They empower me to govern in the King's name the provinces of Brittany, Normandy, Maine, and Anjou; and to acknowledge the services of the officers that shall distinguish themselves in his Majesty's armies."

An evident thrill of satisfaction went through those assembled. The Chouans came up and respectfully formed a circle about the Marquis. All eyes were fixed on the King's signature, when the young chief, who was standing by the hearth, flung the letter into the fire, where it was burned to ashes in a moment.

"I will no longer command any but those who see in the King a King, and not a prey for them to devour. Gentlemen, you are at liberty to leave me—"

A cry of "Long live the King!" went up from Mme. du Gua, the Abbé Gudin, Major Brigaut, the Chevalier du Vissard, the Baron du Guénic, and the Comte de Bauvan. If, in the first instance, the other chiefs wavered a moment before echoing the cry of these enthusiasts, the Marquis's noble action soon produced an effect upon them; they besought him to forget what had happened, and protested that, no matter for letters patent, he should always be their leader.

"Come, let us dance!" cried the Comte de Bauvan, "and happen what may! After all," he added merrily, "it is better praying to God than to the saints. Let us fight first, and by and by we shall see."

"Ah! that is quite true. Begging your pardon, Baron," said Brigaut, speaking in a low voice to the stanch du Guénic, "I have never seen a day's wage asked for in the morning."

The company distributed themselves through the rooms, where several people had already come together. In vain the Marquis tried to dismiss the sombre expression which had wrought a change in his face; the chiefs could easily discern that the foregoing scene had left an unfortunate impression on the mind of a man who still united some of the fair illusions of youth with his devotion to the cause; and this shamed them.

The assemblage, composed of the most enthusiastic partisans of royalty, was radiant with intoxicating joy. In the remote parts of a rebellious province they had never had an opportunity of forming just opinions as to the events of the Revolution, and had to take the most visionary assumptions for solid realities. Their courage had been stimulated by Montauran's bold initial measures, by his fortune and ability, and by the name he bore, all of which had combined to cause that most perilous form of intoxication—the intoxication of politics, which is only abated after torrents of blood have been shed, and, for the most part, shed in vain. The Revolution was only a passing disturbance in France for all those who were present; and for them nothing appeared to be changed. The districts about them held to the House of Bourbon. So complete was the domination of the Royalists that four years previously Hoche had brought about an armistice rather than a peace.

The nobles, therefore, held the Revolutionaries very cheap; they took Bonaparte for a Marceau, who had had better luck than his predecessor. And the ladies prepared to dance, in high spirits. Only a few of the chiefs who had

met the Blues in the field were aware of the real gravity of the crisis, and they knew that they should be misunderstood if they spoke of the First Consul and his power to their countrymen who were behind the times. So they talked among themselves, turning indifferent eyes upon the ladies, who avenged themselves by criticising them to each other. Mme. du Gua, who appeared to be doing the honors of the ball, tried to distract the attention of the ladies from their impatience by retailing conventional flatteries to each in turn. The harsh sounds of the tuning of the instruments were already audible, when Mme. du Gua saw the Marquis, with a trace of melancholy still about his face. She hurried to him, and said—"I hope you are not depressed by the scene you have had with those boors? It is a very commonplace occurrence."

She received no reply. The Marquis was absorbed in his musings. He thought that he heard some of the arguments that Marie had urged upon him in her prophetic tones among these very chiefs at the Vivetière—when she had tried to induce him to abandon the struggle of kings against peoples. But he had too much loftiness of soul, too much pride, and possibly too strong a belief in the work that he had begun, to forsake it now; and he resolved at that moment to carry it on with a stout heart, in spite of obstacles. He raised his head again proudly, and the meaning of Mme. du Gua's words only then reached him.

"You are at Fougères, of course!" she was saying with a bitterness that betrayed the futility of the attempts she had made to divert his mind. "Ah! my lord, I would give all the life in me to put *her* into your hands, and to see you happy with her."

"Then why did you fire at her so dexterously?"

"Because I wished her either dead or in your arms. Yes! I could have given my love to the Marquis of Montauran on the day when I thought that I discerned a hero in him. To-day I have for him only a compassionate friendship; he is held aloof from glory by the roving heart of an opera girl."

"As to love," the Marquis answered with irony in his tones, "you are quite wrong about me! If I loved that girl, madame, I should feel less desire for her—and, but for you, I should even now possibly think no more of her."

"Here she is!" said Mme. du Gua suddenly.

The haste with which the Marquis turned his head gave a horrible pang to the poor lady; but by the brilliant light of the candles the slightest changes that took place in the features of the man whom she so ardently loved were easily discerned, so that she fancied she saw some hopes of a return, when he turned his face back to hers, with a smile at this feminine stratagem.

"At what are you laughing?" asked the Comte de Bauvan.

"At a soap-bubble that has burst!" Mme. du Gua replied gayly. "If we are to believe the Marquis, he wonders to-day that his heart ever beat for a moment for the creature who calls herself Mlle. de Verneuil. You know whom I mean?"

"The creature?" queried the Count, with reproach in his voice. "It is only right, madame, that the author of the mischief should make reparation for it, and I give you my word of honor that she really is the daughter of the Duc de Verneuil."

"Which word of honor, Count?" asked the Marquis in an entirely different tone. "Are we to believe you at the Vivetière or here at Saint James?"

Mlle. de Verneuil was announced in a loud voice. The Count hurried toward the door, offered his hand, with every sign of the deepest respect, to the fair new-comer, and led her through the curious throng of gazers to the Marquis and Mme. du Gua.

"Believe nothing but the word I have given you to-day," he said to the astonished chief.

Mme. du Gua turned pale at the untoward reappearance of the girl who was standing looking proudly about her, to discover, among those assembled, the former guests at the Vivetière. She waited to receive her rival's constrained

greeting; and, without a glance at the Marquis, she allowed the Count to lead her to a place of honor by the side of Mme. du Gua, to whom she bowed slightly in a patronizing way. The latter would not be vexed at this, and her woman's instinct led her at once to assume a friendly and smiling expression. For a moment Mlle. de Verneuil's beauty and singular costume drew a murmur from the company. When the Marquis and Mme. du Gua looked at those who had been at the Vivetière, they saw that the respectful attitude of each one seemed to be sincere, and that every one appeared to be considering how to reinstate himself in the good graces of the Parisian lady, concerning whom they had been in error. The two antagonists were now face to face.

"But this is witchcraft, mademoiselle! Who but you in all the world could take us by surprise like this? Did you really come hither quite alone?" asked Mme. du Gua.

"Quite alone," Mlle. de Verneuil repeated, "so this evening, madame, you will have only me to kill."

"Make allowances for me," answered Mme. du Gua. "I cannot tell you how much pleasure I feel at meeting you again. I have been really overwhelmed by the recollection of the wrong I did you, and I was seeking for an opportunity which should permit me to atone for it."

"The wrong you did me, madame, I can readily pardon; but the death of the Blues whom you murdered lies heavily on my heart. I might, moreover, make some further complaint of the brusque style of your correspondence. . . . But, after all, I forgive everything, on account of the service that you have done me."

Mme. du Gua lost countenance as she felt her hand clasped in that of her lovely rival, who was smiling upon her in an offensively gracious manner. The Marquis had not stirred so far, but now he seized the Count's arm in a close grip.

"You have shamefully deceived me," he said. "You have even involved my honor; I am no comedy dupe; I will have your life for this, or you shall have mine."

"I am ready to afford you every explanation that you may desire, Marquis," said the Count stiffly, and they went into an adjoining room. Even those who were least acquainted with the mystery underlying this scene began to understand the interest that it possessed; so that no one stirred when the violins gave the signal for the dancing to begin.

Mme. du Gua spoke, compressing her lips in a kind of fury—"Mademoiselle, what service can I have had the honor of rendering, of importance sufficient to deserve—?"

"Did you not enlighten me, madame, as to the Marquis de Montauran's real nature? With what calm indifference the execrable man allowed me to go to my death! . . . I give him up to you very willingly."

"Then what have you come here to seek?" Mme. du Gua asked quickly.

"The esteem and the reputation of which you robbed me at the Vivetière, madame. Do not give yourself any uneasiness about anything else. Even if the Marquis were to come back to me, a lost love regained is no love at all, as you must be aware."

Mme. du Gua took Mlle. de Verneuil's hand in hers with a charming caressing gesture, such as women like to use among themselves, especially when men are also present.

"Well, dear child, I am delighted that you are so sensible about it. If the service which I have rendered you has been a somewhat painful one at the outset" (and here she pressed the hand which she held, though she felt within her a wild longing to tear it in pieces, when she found how delicately soft the fingers were), "at any rate it shall be thorough. Just listen to me. I know the Gars' nature well," she went on, with a treacherous smile; "he would have deceived you, he will not marry any woman, nor can he do so."

"Ah!"

"Yes, mademoiselle. He only accepted his perilous mission in order to win the hand of Mlle. d'Uxelles; his Majesty has promised to use all his influence to bring the marriage about."

"Indeed!"

Mlle. de Verneuil added not a word more to this satirical exclamation. The young and handsome Chevalier du Vissard, eager to earn her forgiveness for the witticism which had been a signal for the insults that had followed upon it at the Vivetière, came up to her and respectfully asked for a dance; she gave him her hand, and they hastened to take their places in the same quadrille with Mme. du Gua. The powdered or frizzled hair of the other ladies, and their toilets, which recalled the bygone days of the exiled court, looked ridiculous when confronted with the magnificent simplicity of the elegant costume which the prevailing fashion of the day permitted Mlle. de Verneuil to wear. The ladies condemned it aloud, and inwardly envied her. The men were never weary of admiring the effect of so simple a way of dressing the hair, and every detail about her dress, which owed all its charm to the graceful outlines which it displayed.

The Marquis and the Count returned to the ballroom, and stood behind Mlle. de Verneuil, who did not turn her head; but even if a mirror opposite to her had not informed her of the Marquis's presence, she would have learned it from the face of Mme. du Gua, whose apparent carelessness concealed but ill the anxiety with which she awaited the dispute that must sooner or later take place between the lovers. Although Montauran was talking with the Count and with two other persons, he could overhear the chat of his neighbors and of each pair of dancers, as, in the shifting figures of the quadrille, they stood for a moment where Mlle. de Verneuil had been.

"Oh! *mon Dieu;* yes, madame, she came here by herself," said one.

"She must be very fearless," his partner replied.

"If I had dressed myself like that, I should feel as if I had no clothes on," said another lady.

"Oh! the costume is indelicate," her cavalier answered, "but she is so pretty, and it is very becoming to her."

"Look at her! She dances so perfectly that it makes one blush for her. Is she not exactly like an opera girl?" the envious lady inquired.

"Do you think that she can have come here to treat with us in the name of the First Consul?" asked a third lady.

"What a joke!" said her partner.

"She will scarcely bring innocence with her as a dowry," laughed the lady.

The Gars turned sharply round to see the speaker who had ventured to make such an epigram, and Mme. du Gua gave him a look which said distinctly—"You see what they think of her!"

"Madame," the Count said jestingly to Marie's enemy, "only ladies so far have deprived her of it."

In his heart the Marquis forgave the Count for all his offences. He ventured to glance at his mistress. Her loveliness was enhanced, as is nearly always the case with women, by the candle-light. She reached her place, her back was turned toward him, but as she talked with her partner the persuasive tones of her voice reached the Marquis.

"The First Consul is sending us very formidable ambassadors!" her partner remarked.

"That has been said already, sir, at the Vivetière," she replied.

"Your memory is as good as the King's!" returned the gentleman, vexed at his own awkwardness.

"Offences must be clearly kept in mind if they are to be forgiven," she said quickly, and a smile released him from his predicament.

"Are all of us included in the amnesty?" the Marquis asked. But she flung herself into the dance with childish enthusiasm, leaving him confused, and with his question unanswered. She saw how he was watching her in sullen gloom, and bent her head in a coquettish manner, which displayed the symmetry of her neck, heedful, at the same time, to omit no movement which could reveal the wonderful grace of her form. Marie's beauty was attractive as Hope, and

elusive as Memory. To see her thus was to wish to possess her at any cost. She knew this, and the consciousness of her own beauty made her face at that moment radiant with indescribable loveliness. The Marquis felt a tempest of love, anger and madness raging in his heart; he wrung the Count's hand and withdrew.

"Ah! has he gonè away?" asked Mlle. de Verneuil when she came back to her place.

The Count hurried into the adjoining room and thence brought back the Gars, making a significant gesture for the lady to whom he had extended his protection.

"He is mine!" she said within herself as she studied the Marquis in the mirror; his face was somewhat agitated but he was radiant with hope.

She received the young chief ungraciously and did not vouchsafe a word to him, but she smiled as she turned away; she saw him so far above the others that she felt proud of her tyrannous power over him. Guided by an instinct that all women obey more or less, she determined to make him pay a heavy price for a few kind words, in order that he might learn their value. When the quadrille came to an end, all the gentlemen who had been at the Vivetière came about Marie, each one endeavoring to obtain her forgiveness for his mistake by compliments more or less neatly turned. But he whom she would fain have seen at her feet kept away from her little court.

"He thinks that I love him yet," she said to herself, "and he will not make one among those to whom I am indifferent."

She declined to dance. Then, as if the ball had been given in her honor, she went from quadrille to quadrille, leaning upon the arm of the Comte de Bauvan, with whom it pleased her to appear to be on familiar terms. There was no one present who did not know the whole history of what had happened at the Vivetière, down to the smallest detail, thanks to Madame du Gua, who hoped, by this very publicity given to the affairs of Mlle. de Verneuil and the Marquis, to put a further hindrance to any understanding between them.

In this way the two estranged lovers became objects of general interest. Montauran did not dare to approach his mistress; the recollection of her wrongs and the vehemence of his reawakened desires made her almost terrible in his eyes; and the young girl, though she seemed to give her attention to the dancers, was watching his face and its forced composure.

"It is dreadfully hot in here," she said to her cavalier. "I see that M. de Montauran's forehead is quite damp. Will you take me across to the other side, so that I can breathe? . . . This is stifling."

With a movement of the head, she indicated the next room, where a few card-players were sitting. The Marquis followed her, as if he had guessed at the words from the movements of her lips. He even hoped that she had left the crowd in order to see him once more, and with this hope the violence of his passion grew with redoubled force, after the restraint that he had imposed upon himself for the last few days. It pleased Mlle. de Verneuil to torment the young chief. Those eyes of hers, so like velvet, and so gentle for the Count, became cold and gloomy for him, if he met their gaze by chance. Montauran made an effort that seemed to cost him something, and said in an uncertain voice: "Will you never forgive me?"

"Love forgives nothing unless it forgives everything," she said, in a dry, indifferent tone. Then, as she saw him give a sudden start of joy, she added, "but it must be love. . . ."

She rose, took the Count's arm, and hastened to a little sitting-room adjoining the card-room. The Marquis followed her thither.

"You shall hear me!" he cried.

"You will make others imagine, sir," she replied, "that I came here on your account, and not out of respect for myself. If you will not desist from this detestable persecution, I shall go."

Then he bethought himself of one of the wildest extrava-

gances of the last Duke of Lorraine. "Let me speak to you," he entreated, "only for so long as I can keep this coal in my hand."

He stooped, snatched up a firebrand from the hearth, and held it in a strenuous grasp. Mlle. de Verneuil reddened, drew her arm quickly from the Count, and looked in amazement at the Marquis. The Count softly withdrew and left the lovers alone. Nothing is so convincing in a lover as some piece of splendid folly—his mad courage had shaken Marie's very heart.

"You simply show me," she said, trying to compel him to drop the coal, "that you would be capable of giving me over to the worst of torture. You are all for extremes. You believed the evidence of a fool and a woman's slander; you suspected that she who came to save your life was capable of betraying you."

"Yes," he said, smiling. "I have been cruel to you, but you must forget that;—I shall never forget it. Ah! hear me. . . . I was infamously deceived; but so many things on that wretched day all told against you. . . ."

"And those things were enough to extinguish your love?"

He hesitated a moment; with a scornful movement she rose.

"Marie," he said, "just now, I wish to believe you, and you only."

"Then drop that coal! You must be mad. Open your hand; do as I wish."

He delighted in the feeble resistance he made to her gentle efforts; he wanted to prolong the keen pleasure that he felt in the pressure of her little fingers; but she succeeded at last in opening the hand she felt she could have kissed. The fire had been extinguished in blood.

"Now," she said, "what was the use of doing that?"

She tore little strips from her handkerchief and dressed the wound; it was not very serious, and the Marquis easily concealed it under his glove. Madame du Gua came into

the card-room on tiptoe, and furtively watched the lovers, cleverly keeping herself out of their sight, noting from behind them their slightest movements; yet she found it difficult to guess at their talk from anything that she saw them do.

"If everything that you have heard against me were true, admit, at least, that now I am well avenged," said Marie; there was a malignity in her expression that made the Marquis turn pale.

"What feeling was it that brought you here?"

"My dear boy, you are a great coxcomb. Do you think you can insult such a woman as I am with impunity? I came here for your sake, and for mine," she added after a pause, laying her hand on the cluster of rubies at her breast, and showing him the blade of a poniard.

"What does all this mean?" meditated Madame du Gua.

"But you love me still," Marie went on; "or at least, you wish for me; and that piece of folly of yours," she said, taking the hand in hers, "made it clear to me. I am again as I had wished to be, and I shall go away happy. Those who love us we always forgive. And I—I am loved; I have regained the respect, the man who is for me the whole world; I could die now."

"You love me yet?" said the Marquis.

"Did I say so?" she replied; she laughed; she was happy, for ever since her arrival she had made the Marquis feel increasing torment. "But had I not some sacrifices to make in order to come here? For I saved M. de Bauvan from death," she went on; "and he, more grateful than you, has offered me his name and fortune in return for my protection. That idea never entered your mind."

Her last words astonished the Marquis; the Count appeared to have made a fool of him; he struggled with a feeling of anger stronger than any that he had yet known, and did not reply.

"Ah, you are deliberating!" she said, with a bitter smile.

"Mademoiselle, your misgivings justify mine."

"Let us go back," said Mlle. de Verneuil, who caught a glimpse of Madame du Gua's robe in the card-room.

Marie rose; but a wish to torment her rival made her hesitate a little.

"Do you want to plunge me into hell?" asked the Marquis, taking her hand and holding it tightly.

"Where did you plunge *me* five days ago? And now, now at this moment, are you not leaving me in cruel suspense as to the sincerity of your love?"

"How do I know that your vengeance may not go so far as this—to take possession of my whole life, so that you may sully it, rather than compass my death. . . ."

"Ah, you do not love me; you only think of yourself, and not of me," she said, with angry tears in her eyes.

The coquette knew well the power of those eyes of hers when they were drowned in tears.

"Take my life, then," said the Marquis, now quite beside himself, "but dry those tears."

"Oh, my love!" she murmured; "the words, the tones, the look that I waited for, to wish for thy happiness rather than mine. But, my lord," she resumed, "I ask for one last proof of your affection, that you tell me is so great. I can stay here only for a little, only for the time needed to make sure that you are mine. I shall not take even a glass of water in this house, where a woman lives who has twice tried to murder me, who at this moment perhaps is planning some treachery against us both, and who is listening to us at this moment," she added, pointing out to the Marquis the floating folds of Madame du Gua's robe.

Then she dried her tears, and bent to the ear of the young noble, who trembled to feel her soft breath on him.

"Prepare everything so that we can go," she said. "You will take me back to Fougères, and there you shall know whether I love you or no. For the second time I trust in you. Will you too trust a second time in me?"

"Ah, Marie, you have led me on till I scarcely know

what I am doing. Your words, your looks, your presence intoxicate me. I am ready to do everything you wish."

"Well, then, give me one moment's bliss. Let me enjoy the only triumph for which I have longed. I want to breathe freely once more, to live the life of my dreams, to take my fill of illusions before they leave me. Let us go. Come and dance with me."

They went back again together into the ballroom. For her the gratification of heart and of vanity had been as complete as a woman can know; but her inscrutable soft eyes, the mysterious smile about her mouth, and her swift movements in the excited dance, kept the secret of Mlle. de Verneuil's thoughts as the sea buries the secret of some criminal who has given a heavy corpse into its keeping. Yet a murmur of admiration went through the room as she turned to her lover's arms for the waltz; and closely interlocked, with drooping heads and languid eyes, they swayed voluptuously round and round, clasping each other in a kind of frenzy, revealing all their hopes of pleasure from a closer union.

"Go and see if Pille-Miche is in the camp, Count," said Mme. du Gua to M. de Bauvan. "Bring him to me; and for this little service you may assure yourself that you shall receive anything that you will ask of me, even my hand. . . . My revenge will cost me dear," she said, as she saw him go; "but it shall not fail this time."

A few moments after this scene Mlle. de Verneuil and the Marquis were seated in a berlin drawn by four strong horses. Francine did not utter a word. She was surprised to see the two who to all appearance had been foes now sitting hand in hand and on such good terms with each other. She did not even venture to put the question to herself whether this meant love or treachery on her mistress's part. Thanks to the stillness and the darkness of night, the Marquis could not perceive Mlle. de Verneuil's agitation, which increased as she drew nearer and nearer to Fougères. Through the faint dusk they could see the spire of St. Leon-

ard's church in the distance; and then—"I shall die," said Marie to herself.

When they reached the first hill on the road, the same thought came to both the lovers; they left the carriage, and walked up it, as if in memory of that first day of their meeting.

Marie took Montauran's arm, and thanked him by a smile for having respected her silence. When they reached the stretch of level ground at the summit, whence they could see Fougères, she emerged from her revery.

"Come no further," she said; "my authority will not save you from the Blues to-day."

Montauran showed some astonishment at this; but she smiled sadly and pointed to a massive bowlder, as if to bid him to be seated, while she herself remained standing in a melancholy attitude. The heartrending grief within her made the artifices which she had used so lavishly no longer possible to her. She could have knelt on burning coals just then, and have been no more conscious of them than the Marquis had been of the brand which he had seized to make known the vehemence of his passion. After looking long at her lover with the deepest sorrow in her gaze, she pronounced the terrible words—"All your suspicions of me are true."

The Marquis made an unconscious movement.

"Ah! for pity's sake," she cried, clasping her hands, "hear me to the end without interrupting me. I am really the daughter of the Duc de Verneuil," she went on in an unsteady voice; "but I am only his natural daughter. My mother, a Mlle. de Casteran, took the veil to escape from the punishment which her family had prepared for her. She expiated her fault by fifteen years of weeping, and died at Séez. It was only at the last, when on her deathbed, that the dear abbess, for my sake, sent an entreaty to the man who had forsaken her; for she knew that I had neither friends, nor fortune, nor prospects. This man, who was well remembered in Francine's home (for I had been con-

fided to her mother's care), had quite forgotten his child. Yet the duke welcomed me gladly, and recognized my claim upon him because I was pretty, and perhaps, too, because I brought back memories of his younger days. He was one of those great lords who, in the previous reign, took a pride in showing how that, if a crime were but gracefully perpetrated, it needs must be condoned. I will say no more about him; he was my father. And yet you must suffer me to explain how my life in Paris could not but leave my mind tainted. In the Duc de Verneuil's circle, and in the society into which he introduced me, there was a craze for the sceptical philosophy which France had accepted with enthusiasm, because it was put forward everywhere with so much ability. The brilliant talk that pleased my ears found favor with me on account of the keenness of apprehension displayed in it, or by reason of the cleverly-turned formulas which brought contempt upon religion and upon truth. The men who made light of feelings and opinions expressed them all the better because they had never felt or held them; and their epigrammatic turn of expression was not more attractive than the lively ease with which they could put a whole story into a word. Sometimes, however, their cleverness misled them; and women found them wearisome when love-making became a science rather than an affair of the heart. I made a feeble resistance to this torrent, although my soul (forgive me for my vanity) was impassioned enough to feel that *esprit* had withered all these natures about me; the life that I led in those days ended in a chronic strife between my natural disposition and the warped habits of mind that I had acquired. A few aspiring intellects had amused themselves by encouraging me in a freedom of thought and a contempt for public opinion that deprives a woman of a certain reticence, without which she has no charm. Alas! it has not been in the power of adversity to correct the defects which prosperity implanted in me," and she sighed.

"My father, the Duc de Verneuil," she resumed, "died after recognizing me as his daughter, leaving a will which

considerably diminished the estate of my half-brother, his legitimate son, in my favor. One morning I found myself without a protector or a roof above my head. My brother disputed the will which had enriched me. My vanity had been developed during the past three years that had been spent in a wealthy household. My father had indulged all my fancies; to him I owed a craving for luxury, and habits in which my simple and inexperienced mind failed to recognize a perilous bondage. The Maréchal Duc de Lenoncourt, one of my father's friends, a man of seventy, offered to become my guardian. I accepted his offer; and a few days after the detestable lawsuit had begun, I found myself in a splendid house, where I was in full possession of all the advantages that a brother's unkindness had refused to me over our father's coffin. The old Marshal used to come to spend a few hours with me every evening; and from him I heard only gentle and soothing words. His white hair and all the touching proofs of paternal tenderness which he gave me led me to believe that the feelings of my own heart were likewise his; and I liked to think that I was his daughter. I took the ornaments that he gave to me, and made no secret of any of my fancies when I saw him so glad to indulge them. One evening I discovered that all Paris looked upon me as the poor old man's mistress. It was made clear to me that I could never re-establish my innocence, of which I had been groundlessly deprived. The man who had taken advantage of my inexperience could not be my lover, and would not be my husband. In the week in which I made this hideous discovery, and on the eve of the day that had been fixed for my marriage—for I had insisted that he should give me his name, the one reparation that it was in his power to make me—he suddenly started for Coblentz. I was ignominiously driven from the little house in which the Marshal had installed me, and which was not his own property. So far I have told the truth to you as if I stood before the Judgment Throne; but after this point do not ask for a complete list of all the sufferings that lie buried in the memory of an un-

happy girl. One day, sir, I found myself Danton's wife. A few days later, and the great oak-tree about which I had cast my arms was uprooted by the tempest. Then, when plunged for the second time into utter misery, I determined to die. I do not know if it was mere love of life, or the hope of outwearing misfortune, and so of finding at last, in the depths of this infinite abyss, the happiness that eluded my grasp, or by what other motive I was unconsciously counselled. I know not whether I was led away by the arguments of the young man from Vendôme, who, for the past two years, has hung about me like a serpent about a tree, thinking, no doubt, that some overwhelming misfortune may give me to him. Indeed, I do not know how I came to accept this hateful mission, of winning the love of a stranger whom I was to betray for three hundred thousand francs! Then I saw you, sir, and I knew you at once. I knew it by one of those presentiments that never lead us astray; and yet I was glad to doubt it, for the more I loved you, the more appalling the conviction grew for me. When I rescued you from Hulot's clutches, I forswore the part that I was playing; I determined to outwit the executioners instead of deceiving their victim. It was wrong of me to play in that way with men's lives, and with their schemes, and with myself, with all the heedlessness of a girl who can see nothing but sentiment in the world. I thought that I was loved, and allowed the hope of beginning my life anew to be my guide; but everything about me, and even I myself, perhaps, betrayed my lawless past, for you must have mistrusted a woman with so passionate a nature as mine. Alas! who could refuse forgiveness to me for my love and my dissimulation? Yes, sir, I felt as though, after a long and uneasy sleep, I had awakened to find myself a girl of sixteen again. Was I not in Alençon? The pure and innocent memories of my childish days there rose up before me. My wild credulity led me to think that love would give me a baptism of innocence. For a little while I thought that I was a maiden still, for as yet I had never loved. But, yesterday evening

it seemed to me that there was sincerity in your passion; and a voice within me cried, 'Why do you deceive him?' Know this, therefore, Marquis," she went on, in a deep, hard voice which seemed proudly to demand her own condemnation—"know this for a certainty, that I am only a dishonored creature and unworthy of you. From this moment I will resume my rôle of castaway; I am too weary to sustain any longer the part of the woman whom you had led to yield herself to all the most sacred impulses of her heart. Virtue weighs me down; I should despise you if you were weak enough to marry me. A Comte de Bauvan might perhaps commit such a folly; but you, sir, be worthy of your future, and leave me without regret. The courtesan, you see, would require too much; *she* would love you in nowise like a simple and artless girl—she who felt in her heart for a little while the exquisite hope that she might be your companion, that she might make you always happy and do you honor, and be a noble and high-minded wife to you; and who, through these very thoughts that moved her, gathered courage, and revived her evil nature of vice and infamy, so as to set it between herself and you as an eternal barrier. I give up honor and fortune for your sake. The pride which lays this sacrifice upon me will uphold me in my wretchedness, and my fate I leave to the disposal of destiny. I will never betray you. I shall go back to Paris; and when I am there your name will be another separate self to me; and the splendid heroism with which you will invest it will be my consolation in all my sorrows. As for you, you are a man; you will forget me—Farewell."

She fled in the direction of the valleys of St. Sulpice, and vanished before the Marquis had risen to delay her; but she retraced her steps, hid herself in a fissure of the rocks, raised her head, and anxiously and doubtfully studied the Marquis. He was walking on without heeding the direction in which he went, like a man distraught.

"If his should be a weak nature," she said to herself as he disappeared, and she felt herself cut off from him, "will

he understand me?" She trembled. Then she suddenly walked on toward Fougères by herself, with rapid steps, as if she feared that the Marquis might follow her to the town, where he would have met with his death.

"Well, Francine, what did he say?" she asked of her faithful Breton, as soon as they were together again.

"Alas! Marie, I was sorry for him. You great ladies can stab a man to the heart with a bitter word."

"What was he like when he came up with you?"

"Did he so much as see me?—Oh! Marie, he loves you!"

"Oh, he loves me, or he loves me not!" she answered, "two words that mean heaven or hell for me; and between those two extremes I cannot find a place on which to set my foot."

After she had accomplished the task laid upon her by fate, Marie could give way to her sorrow. Her face had kept its composure hitherto, owing to a mixture of different sentiments within her, but now it underwent a rapid change, so that after a day spent in fluctuating between presentiments of joy or despair, her beauty lost its radiance and the freshness which owes its existence either to the absence of all passion or to transports of happiness. Hulot and Corentin came to see her shortly after her arrival, curious to know the results of her wild enterprise. Marie received them smilingly.

"Well," she said to the commandant, whose anxious face looked searchingly at her, "the fox is coming within range of your guns again, and you will soon gain a very glorious victory!"

"What has happened?" Corentin inquired carelessly. He gave Mlle. de Verneuil a sidelong glance, such as this sort of diplomatist uses for discovering the thoughts of others.

"Ah!" she answered, "the Gars is more in love with me than ever, and I made him come with us as far as the gates of Fougères."

"Apparently that is where your power ends," said Co-

rentin, "and the *ci-devant's* fears are still stronger than the love which you inspire in him."

Mlle. de Verneuil glanced contemptuously at Corentin.

"You judge him by yourself," she replied.

"Well," he said, serenely, "why did you not bring him as far as your own house?"

"If he really loved me, commandant," she said to Hulot, with a malicious glance, "would you bear a grudge against me if I saved him and bore him away out of France?"

The old veteran went quickly up to her, and took her hand as if to kiss it, with a sort of enthusiasm; then he gazed steadily at her and said, as his brow grew dark—"You forget my two friends, and my sixty-three men!"

"Ah! commandant," she said, with all the *naïveté* of passion, "that was not his fault, he was tricked by a bad woman, Charette's mistress, who, I believe, would drink the blood of the Blues."

"Come, Marie," Corentin put in, "do not make fun of the commandant; he does not understand your jests as yet."

"Be silent," she answered, "and know that the day on which you annoy me a little too much will be your last."

"I see, mademoiselle," said Hulot, with no bitterness in his tone, "that I must prepare to fight."

"You are in no condition to do so, my dear colonel. I saw more than six thousand of their men at Saint James; regular troops, and ordnance, and English officers. But without *him*, what will become of all these people? I think, as Fouché does, that his head is everything."

"Very well, when shall we have it?" Corentin asked impatiently.

"I do not know," was her careless response.

"English officers!" cried Hulot, in hot wrath, "the one thing wanting to make a downright brigand of him! Ah! I will fit him up with his Englishmen, that I will! . . . It seems to me, citizen diplomatist, that you allow that girl to upset all your plans from time to time," was Hulot's

remark to Corentin, when they were a few paces distant from the house.

"It is quite natural, citizen commandant," said Corentin, with a pensive air, "that you are bewildered by all that she has told us. You men of the sword do not know that there are several ways of making war. To make a dexterous use of the passions of men and women, as so many springs which can be set in motion for the benefit of the State; to set in position all the wheels in the mighty piece of machinery that we call a Government; to take a pleasure in setting within it the most stubborn sentiments, like detents whose action one can amuse one's self by controlling; is not all this the work of a creator? Is it not a position like God's, in the centre of the universe?"

"You will permit me to prefer my trade to yours," the soldier answered dryly. "Do as you will with that machinery of yours; I acknowledge no superior but the Minister of War. I have my instructions, and I shall take the field with stout fellows who will not skulk, and openly confront the enemy whom you wish to take from behind."

"Oh, you can get ready to march if you like," Corentin rejoined. "Inscrutable as you may think this girl, I have managed to gather from her that there will be some skirmishing for you; and before very long I shall have the pleasure of obtaining for you a *tête-à-tête* with the chief of these brigands."

"How will you do that?" inquired Hulot, stepping back a little, the better to see this singular being.

"Mlle. de Verneuil loves the Gars," Corentin answered in a stifled voice, "and very likely he is in love with her. He is a Marquis, he wears the red ribbon, he is young, and he has a clever head, who knows but that he may still be wealthy—how many inducements! She would be very foolish not to play for her own hand, and try to marry him rather than give him up to us. She is endeavoring to keep us amused, but I can read a kind of misgiving in the girl's eyes. The two lovers will most probably arrange a meeting, per-

haps they have done so already. Well, then, to-morrow I shall have my man fast enough. Hitherto he was the enemy of the Republic and nothing more, but a few minutes ago he became mine as well, for all those who have taken it into their heads to come between this girl and me have died on the scaffold."

When he had finished, Corentin became too much absorbed in his own meditations to notice the expression of intense disgust on the true-hearted soldier's face. When Hulot became aware of the depths in this intrigue, and of the nature of the springs employed in Fouché's machinery, he made up his mind at once to thwart Corentin in every matter in which the success of the enterprise or the wishes of the Government were not essentially concerned, and to give to the foe of the Republic a chance of dying honorably sword in hand, before he could fall a victim to the executioner, whose avowed caterer stood before him in the person of this secret agent of the upper powers of the police.

"If the First Consul were to take my advice," he said, turning his back on Corentin, "he would leave this kind of fox to fight it out with the aristocrats—they would be well matched—and he should employ soldiers in quite other business."

Corentin looked coolly at the veteran (whose thoughts shone out plainly in his face), and a sardonic expression returned to his eyes, revealing a sense of superiority in this Machiavelian understrapper.

"Give three ells of blue cloth to brutes of that sort, and hang a bit of iron at their sides, and they fancy that in politics men may only be got rid of after one fashion," said he to himself. He walked slowly on for a few minutes, and suddenly exclaimed within—"Yes, the hour has come, and the woman shall be mine! The circle that I have traced about her has been gradually growing smaller and smaller for five years; I have her now, and with her help I shall climb as high in the Government as Fouché. . . . Yes, when she loses the one man whom she has loved, the agony

of it will give her to me body and soul. All that I have to do now is to keep a watch on her night and day, to surprise her secret."

A moment later an onlooker might have seen Corentin's pale face at the window of a house whence he could behold every one who came into the blind alley, between the row of houses and St. Leonard's Church. He was there again on the morning of the next day; patient as a cat that lies in wait for a mouse, attentive to the slightest sound, and engaged in submitting every passer-by to a rigorous scrutiny. It was the morning of a market day; and although in those troubled times the peasants scarcely ventured to come to the town, Corentin saw a gloomy-looking man clad in goatskins, who carried a small round flat-shaped basket on his arm, and who went toward Mlle. de Verneuil's house, after giving a careless look round about him. Corentin came down from his post, purposing to stop the peasant as he came out; but it suddenly occurred to him that if he could enter Mlle. de Verneuil's house at unawares, a single glance might possibly surprise the secret hidden in the messenger's basket. Popular report, moreover, had taught him that it was all but impossible to come off best in an encounter with the impenetrable replies that Normans and Bretons are wont to make.

"Galope-Chopine!" cried Mlle. de Verneuil, as Francine brought in the Chouan.

"Am I then beloved?" she added to herself in a low voice. An instinct of hope brought a bright color to her face, and put joy in her heart. Galope-Chopine looked by turns at the mistress of the house and at Francine, casting suspicious glances at the latter, until his doubts were removed by a sign from Mlle. de Verneuil.

"Madame," he said, "toward two o'clock *he* will be at my place, waiting for you."

Mlle. de Verneuil's agitation was so great that she could only bend her head in reply, but a Samoyede could have understood all its significance. Corentin's footsteps echoed in the salon at that moment. Galope-Chopine was not dis-

turbed in the least when Mlle. de Verneuil's glance and shudder made him aware of approaching danger. As soon as the spy showed his astute countenance, the Chouan raised his voice to a deafening pitch.

"Yes, yes!" he said to Francine, "there is Brittany butter and Brittany butter. You want Gibarry butter, and only give eleven sous the pound for it? You ought not to have sent for me! This is really good butter," he said, opening his basket, and exhibiting two pats that Barbette had made up. "Pay a fair price, good lady. Come, another sou!" There was no trace of agitation in his hollow voice, and his green eyes, underneath the bushy gray eyebrows, bore Corentin's keen scrutiny without flinching.

"Come now, my man, hold your tongue. You did not come here to sell butter; you are dealing with a lady who never drove a bargain in her life. Your line of business, old boy, will leave you shorter by a head some of these days."

Corentin tapped him amicably on the shoulder and continued, "You cannot be in the service of both Chouans and Blues at once for very long."

It took all Galope-Chopine's self-possession to choke down his wrath, and so prevent himself from rebutting this accusation, which, owing to his avarice, was a true one. He contented himself with saying—"The gentleman has a mind to laugh at me."

Corentin had turned his back upon the Chouan; but as he greeted Mlle. de Verneuil, whose heart stood still with terror, he could easily watch the man in the mirror. Galope-Chopine, who believed that the spy could no longer see him, looked inquiringly at Francine, and Francine pointed to the door, saying—"Come along with me, good man; we shall always manage to settle things comfortably."

Nothing had been lost upon Corentin. He had seen everything. He had noticed the contraction of Mlle. de Verneuil's mouth, which her smile had failed to disguise; and her red flush, and the alteration in her features, as well as the Chouan's uneasiness and Francine's gesture. He felt

certain that Galope-Chopine was a messenger from the Marquis, caught at the long hair of the man's goatskins, stopped him just as he was going out, drew him back so that he confronted his own steady gaze, and said—"Where do you live, my good friend? *I* want butter—"

"Good gentleman," the Chouan answered, "everybody in Fougères knows where I live. I am, as you may say—"

"Corentin!" cried Mlle. de Verneuil, breaking in upon Galope-Chopine's answer, "it is a great piece of presumption on your part to pay me a visit at this time of day, and to take me by surprise like this! I am scarcely dressed! Leave the peasant in peace, he understands your tactics as little as I understand your motives for them. Go, good fellow!"

Galope-Chopine hesitated for a moment before he went. The indecision of an unlucky wretch who cannot tell whom he must obey, whether it was real or feigned, had already succeeded in deceiving Corentin; and the Chouan, at an imperative gesture from Marie, tramped heavily away. Then Mlle. de Verneuil and Corentin looked at one another in silence. This time Marie's clear eyes could not endure the intensity of the arid glare that was shed upon her in the other's gaze. The determined manner with which the spy had made his way into her room, an expression on his face which was new to Marie, the dull sound of his thin voice, his attitude, everything about him, alarmed her. She felt that a secret struggle had begun between them, and that he was exerting all the powers of his sinister influence against her; but although at that moment she distinctly beheld the full extent of the gulf, and the depths to which she had consigned herself, she drew sufficient strength from her love to shake off the icy cold of her presentiments.

"Corentin," she began, with an attempt at mirth, "I hope you will allow me to finish my toilet."

"Marie," said he—"yes, allow me to call you so—you do not know me yet! Listen! A less sharp-sighted man than I am would have found out your love for the Marquis

de Montauran before this. I have again and again offered you my heart and my hand. You did not think me worthy of you, and perhaps you are right; but if you think that you are too much above me, too beautiful or too high-minded for me, I can easily make you come down to my level. My ambitions and my doctrines have inspired you with scanty respect for me, and, to be plain with you, you are wrong. The value of men is even less than my estimate of them, and I rate them at next to nothing. There can be no doubt but that I shall attain to a high position, to honors that will gratify your pride. Who will love you better than I? Over whom will you have such an absolute dominion as over the man who has loved you for five years past? At the risk of making an impression upon you which will not be in my favor (for you have no idea that it is possible to renounce, through excess of love, the woman whom one worships), I will give you a measure of the disinterested affection with which I adore you. Do not shake your pretty head in that way. If the Marquis loves you, marry him, but first make quite sure of his sincerity. If I knew that you were disappointed in him, I should be in despair, for your happiness is dearer to me than my own. My determination may surprise you, but you must ascribe it simply to the prudence of a man who is not fool enough to wish to possess a woman against her will. I blame myself, moreover, and not you, for the futility of my efforts. I hoped to win you by dint of submission and devotion; for, as you know, for a long time past I have tried to make you happy, after my notions; but you have thought fit to reward me for nothing."

"I have endured your presence," she said haughtily.

"Say further that you are sorry to have done so."

"After you have committed me to this disgraceful enterprise, are thanks still owing to you?"

"When I proposed an undertaking to you, in which timorous souls might find something blameworthy, I had only your fortune in view," he answered audaciously. "As for me, whether I succeed or fail, I can now make every sort of

result conduce to the ultimate success of my plans. If you should marry Montauran, I shall be delighted to make myself useful to the Bourbon cause in Paris, where I am a member of the Clichy Club. As it happens, any circumstance that put me in correspondence with the princes would persuade me to quit the cause of a Republic which is tottering to its fall. General Bonaparte is far too clever not to perceive that he cannot possibly be at once in Germany and Italy and here where the Revolution is on the wane. He arranged the 18th Brumaire because, no doubt, he wished to obtain the best possible terms from the Bourbons, in treating with them as to France; for he is a very clever fellow, and has no lack of capacity. But politicians ought to get ahead of him on the road on which he has entered. As to betraying France, we who are superior to any scruples on that score can leave them to fools. I am fully empowered—I do not conceal it from you—either to open negotiations with the Chouan chiefs or to extirpate them; for my patron Fouché is deep fellow enough, he has always played a double game. During the Terror he was at once for Robespierre and for Danton—"

"Whom you forsook like a coward!" she said.

"Rubbish," replied Corentin; "he is dead, forget him. Come, speak your mind frankly; I have set the example. The chief of demi-brigade is shrewder than he looks, and if you wish to elude the watch he keeps, I might be useful to you. So long as you stay here, beneath his eye, you are at the mercy of his police. You see how quickly he learned that the Chouan was with you! How could his military sagacity fail to make it plain to him that your least movements would keep him informed as to the whereabout of the Marquis, if you are loved by Montauran?"

Mlle. de Verneuil had never heard such gentle, affectionate tones before. Corentin seemed to be absolutely sincere, and to put full trust in her. The poor girl's heart so readily received generous impressions that she was about to intrust her secret to the serpent who had wound his coils about her.

She bethought herself, however, that she had no proof whatever that this crafty talk was genuine, and so she felt no hesitation about deceiving the man who was watching her.

"Well," she answered, "you have guessed my secret, Corentin. Yes, I love the Marquis; but I am not loved by him, or at least, I fear not; so that the rendezvous he has made seems to me to hide some trap."

"But you told us yesterday that he had come with you as far as Fougères," Corentin replied. "If he had intended violence, you would not be here."

"Your heart is withered, Corentin. You can base cunningly contrived schemes on the occurrences of ordinary life, but you cannot reckon with the course of passion. Perhaps that is the cause of the aversion that you always inspire in me. But as you are so clear-sighted, try to understand how it is that a man from whom the day before yesterday I parted in anger is waiting eagerly for me to-day on the Mayenne road, at a house in Florigny, toward the end of the day—"

At this confession, which seemed to have escaped from her in a moment of excitement natural enough in a nature so passionate and outspoken, Corentin reddened, for he was still young; but furtively he gave her one of those keen glances that try to explore the soul. Mlle. de Verneuil's feigned revelation of self had been made so skilfully that the spy was deceived. He made answer with a semblance of good nature, "Would you like me to follow you at a distance? I would take soldiers in plain clothes with me, and we should be at your orders."

"I agree to it," said she, "but promise me, on your honor—Oh, no! for I put no faith in that; on your salvation—but you do not believe in God; on your soul—but perhaps you have no soul. What guarantee can you give me of your fidelity? And yet I am trusting in you, notwithstanding, and I am putting into your hands more than my life, or my love, or my revenge!"

The faint smile that appeared over Corentin's sallow fea-

tures showed Mlle. de Verneuil the danger that she had just escaped. The agent of police, whose nostrils seemed to contract rather than to expand, took his victim's hand and kissed it with every outward sign of deep respect, and took leave of her with a not ungraceful bow.

Three hours later, Mlle. de Verneuil, who stood in fear of Corentin's return, stole out of St. Leonard's Gate and took the narrow path down the Nid-aux-Crocs, which led into the Nançon valley. She thought herself safe as she went unnoticed, through the labyrinth of tracks which led to Galope-Chopine's cabin, whither she betook herself with a light heart, for the hope of happiness led her on, as well as a strong wish to save her lover from the dangers that threatened him.

Corentin, meanwhile, went in quest of the commandant. He had some difficulty in recognizing Hulot when he came upon him in a little square, where the commandant was deep in military preparations. Indeed, the brave veteran had made a sacrifice of which the merit can hardly be estimated. His queue had been cut off, he had shaved his mustache, and there was a trace of powder about his hair which was clipped as short as a priest's. He wore great iron-bound shoes, and had exchanged his old blue uniform and his sword for goatskins, a belt adorned with pistols, and a heavy carbine. Thus accoutred he was reviewing two hundred of the townsmen of Fougères, whose costumes might have deceived the eyes of the most expert Chouan. The martial fervor of the little town and of the native Breton character was very evident. There was no novelty about the spectacle. Here and there a mother or sister carried to a son or brother a gourd of brandy or pistols that had been forgotten. A number of old men were investigating the quality and quantity of the cartridges supplied to the National Guards thus metamorphosed into Counter-Chouans, whose high spirits seemed more in accordance with a hunting party than with a dangerous enterprise. The skirmishes of Chouannerie, wherein Breton townsmen fought with Breton

peasants, appeared, in their eyes, to be a substitute for the tournaments of chivalry. Possibly this fervid patriotism had its source in certain grants of National property; but the benefits of the Revolution (which were better appreciated in the towns), as well as party spirit and a characteristic and innate love of fighting, all counted for something in bringing about their enthusiasm.

Hulot went through the ranks in admiration, making inquiries of Gudin, to whom he had transferred the friendship he had formerly entertained for Merle and Gérard. A crowd of townspeople, examining the preparations for their expedition, compared the appearance of their undisciplined fellow-countrymen with that of a battalion of Hulot's own demi-brigade.

Silent and motionless, the Blues stood drawn up in line, under the command of their officers, awaiting the orders of the commandant, whom the eyes of every soldier followed about from group to group. As Corentin approached the chief of demi-brigade, he could not repress a smile at the change that had been wrought in Hulot's face. He looked like a portrait which no longer bears any likeness to the original.

"What is the news now?" Corentin asked him.

"Come and fire a shot along with us, and you will know," the commandant replied.

"Oh! I do not belong to Fougères," answered Corentin.

"That is easy to see, citizen," said Gudin.

A mocking laugh broke out here and there among the groups of bystanders.

"Do you imagine," retorted Corentin, "that France can only be served with the bayonet?" He turned his back on the scoffers and went up to one of the women to inquire the purpose and the destination of the expedition.

"Alas! good sir, the Chouans are even now at Florigny! They say that they are more than three thousand strong, and that they are marching on Fougères."

"Florigny!" cried Corentin, turning pale.

"Then her rendezvous is not there! . . Are they really at Florigny on the road to Mayenne?" he asked.

"There is only one Florigny," the woman answered, and as she spoke she indicated the road that was cut short by the summit of La Pèlerine.

"Are you looking for the Marquis de Montauran?" Corentin asked the commandant.

"Rather!" Hulot answered shortly.

"Then he is not at Florigny," Corentin resumed. "Bring your own battalion and the National Guard to bear on that point, but keep a few of your Counter-Chouans with you and wait for me."

"He is too cunning to be mad," the commandant exclaimed, as he watched Corentin set off with hasty strides. "He is the very king of spies!"

Hulot immediately gave his battalion a signal to depart. The Republican soldiers marched silently and without beat of drum through the narrow suburb that lies on the way to the Mayenne road, forming a long streak of blue and red among the houses and trees. The disguised National Guards followed them, but Hulot stayed behind in the little square, with Gudin and a score of the smartest of the young men of the town. He was waiting for Corentin, whose enigmatical air had roused his curiosity. Francine herself told Corentin that Mlle. de Verneuil had gone out, and the keen-witted spy's surmise became a certainty. He started out at once in quest of any light that he could obtain as to this abrupt departure, which with good reason seemed suspicious to him. Corentin learned from the soldiers in the guard-house at St. Leonard's Gate that the fair stranger had gone down the path on the side of the Nid-aux-Crocs; he hurried to the Promenade, and unluckily reached it just in time to watch all Marie's slightest movements from his post of observation. Though she had dressed herself in a hood and gown of green, so as to be less conspicuous, the quick uneven movements of her almost frenzied progress among the

hedges, now leafless and white with hoarfrost, readily betrayed the direction in which she was going.

"Ah!" he cried, "you should by rights be on the way to Florigny, and you are going down the dale of Gibarry! I am a fool after all. She has tricked me. Patience, though, I can light my lamp in the daytime quite as well as at night."

Corentin, who had all but detected the spot where the two lovers were to meet, hurried back into the square just as Hulot was leaving it to rejoin his troops.

"Halt, General!" he shouted, and the commandant came back. In a brief space Corentin put the soldier in possession of the facts that seemed to be visible threads in a web as yet concealed from them. Hulot, struck with the diplomatist's astuteness, seized him by the arm.

"*Mille tonnerres!* you are right, citizen Pry! The bandits down there are making a feint! The two flying columns that I sent out to reconnoitre the neighborhood which lies between the road to Antrain and the road to Vitré have not yet come back. So we shall, no doubt, obtain reinforcements in the country which will come in handy, for the Gars is not such a fool as to venture out without his blessed screech-owls. Gudin," he went on, addressing the young Fougerais, "hurry off, and let Captain Lebrun know that he can do without me at Florigny; tell him to give the brigands there a dressing-down, and come back again in less than no time. You know the short cuts. I shall wait for you here to set out on a hunt for the *ci-devant*, and to avenge the murders at the Vivetière. *Tonnerre de Dieu!* how he runs!" he added, as he watched Gudin set off, and vanish as if by magic. "How Gérard would have liked that fellow!"

When Gudin came back he found the numbers of Hulot's little band increased. A few soldiers had been withdrawn from the guardhouses in the town. The commandant told the young Fougerais to pick out a dozen of his countrymen who were best acquainted with the risky trade of Counter-Chouan, and ordered him to make his way through St. Leonard's Gate so as to go over the whole length of that

side of the hills of St. Sulpice which overlooked the main valley of the Couësnon, the side moreover on which Galope-Chopine's cabin lay. Hulot put himself at the head of his remaining men, and went out of the town through the gate of St. Sulpice, meaning to climb the hills and to follow the line of their crests, where, according to his calculations, he ought to fall in with Beau-Pied and his men, whom he intended to employ in forming a cordon of sentinels who should watch the crags from the suburb of St. Sulpice as far as the Nid-aux-Crocs.

Corentin, feeling quite certain that he had put the fate of the Chouan chief into the hands of his bitterest foes, promptly betook himself to the Promenade, the better to grasp the whole of Hulot's military disposition. He was not slow to perceive Gudin's little band, as it issued from the valley of the Nançon, and followed the line of the crags along the side of the Couësnon valley; while Hulot, breaking cover, stole under the walls of the castle of Fougères, and climbed the dangerous path that ascends to the summits of the hills of St. Sulpice. The two bodies of men, therefore, appeared in parallel lines. The rich tracery of hoar-frost that decorated every bush and tree had given a white hue to the country side, which made it easy to watch the gray moving lines of the two small bodies of soldiers.

When Hulot reached the level heights of the crags, he called out all the men in uniform among his troops, and Corentin saw how they were posted, by the orders of the keen-sighted commandant, as a line of patrolling sentinels, with a sufficient distance between each man. The first man of the chain communicated with Gudin, and the last with Hulot, so that there was no bush that could escape the bayonets of the three moving lines which were to hunt down the Gars, over hill and field.

"The old war-wolf is crafty!" cried Corentin as the glittering points of the last bayonets disappeared in the *ajoncs*. "The Gars' goose is cooked! If Marie had betrayed this accursed Marquis, she and I should have had the strongest

of all bonds between us—the bond of guilt. But she shall certainly be mine!"

The twelve lads from Fougères, under the command of Gudin, their sub-lieutenant, very soon reached a spot on the other side of the St. Sulpice crags, where they slope by degrees into the dale of Gibarry. Gudin himself left the road, and vaulted lightly over the *échalier* into the first field of broom that he came across. Six of his fellows went with him, while the other six, in obedience to his orders, took the fields to the right, so that in this way they beat up both sides of the road. Gudin himself hurried to an apple tree that stood in the midst of the broom. At the sound of the footsteps of the six Counter-Chouans, whom Gudin led through the forest of bushes, making every effort the while not to disturb the rime upon them, Beau-Pied and seven or eight men under his command hid themselves behind some chestnut trees that grew on the summit of the hedge, by which the field was surrounded. In spite of the white covering that enveloped the country, and in spite of their well-trained eyes, the lads from Fougères at first did not notice the others, who had made a sort of rampart of the trees.

"Hush!" said Beau-Pied, who had raised his head first, "here they are! The brigands have got ahead of us; but since we have them here at the ends of our guns, don't let us miss them, or, my word for it, we shall not even be fit to be soldiers to the Pope!"

Gudin's keen eyes, however, had at last discerned the barrels of the muskets that were pointed at his little party. Eight loud voices immediately shouted, "Who goes there!" a bitter gibe that was followed up at once by eight shots. The bullets whistled about the Counter-Chouans; one was hit in the arm, and another dropped. Five of the party who remained unhurt retorted with a volley, as they answered, "Friends!" and marched rapidly upon their supposed enemies, so as to come upon them before they could reload.

"We did not know that there was so much truth in what

we said," the young sub-lieutenant exclaimed, as he recognized the uniforms and shabby hats of his demi-brigade. "We have acted in true Breton fashion, fighting first, and asking for explanations afterward."

The eight soldiers stood dumfounded at the sight of Gudin. "Plague take it, sir, who the devil could help taking you for the brigands in those goatskins of yours?" cried Beau-Pied dolefully.

"It is unlucky, and none of us are to blame, for you were not told beforehand that our Counter-Chouans were going to make a sortie. But what are you about?" Gudin asked him.

"We are looking out for a dozen Chouans, sir, who are amusing themselves by breaking our backs. We have been running for it like poisoned rats, but our legs are stiff with jumping over these *echaliers* and hedges (heaven confound them!), so we were taking a rest. I think by now the brigands must be somewhere near the shanty you see over there with the smoke rising from it."

"Good!" cried Gudin. "As for you," he said to Beau-Pied, and his eight men, "fall back across the fields on the crags of St. Sulpice, and support the line of sentinels that the commandant has posted there. It will not do for you to stay with us, as you are in uniform. *Mille cartouches!* We want to put an end to the dogs; the Gars is among them! Your comrades will tell you more about it than I can. File to the left, and do not fire on half a dozen of our goatskins, whom you may come across. You can tell our Chouans by their cravats; they are wound round their necks without a knot."

Gudin left the two wounded men under the apple tree, and went toward Galope-Chopine's house, which Beau-Pied had pointed out to him, guided by the smoke that rose from it. While the young officer had been put on the track of the Chouans by a chance fray common enough in this war, but which might have been much more serious, the little detachment under Hulot's command had reached a point in his line of operations parallel with that reached by Gudin on the

other side. The veteran, at the head of his Counter-Chouans, stole noiselessly along the hedges with all the eagerness of a young man. He sprang over the *echaliers* lightly enough, even now; his tawny eyes wandered over the heights, and he turned his ear like a hunter toward the slightest sound. In the third field which he entered he saw a woman of thirty, or thereabout, engaged in hoeing. She was hard at work, and bending over her toil; while a little boy, about seven or eight years old, armed with a bill-hook, was shaking the hoarfrost from a few furze-bushes that had sprung up here and there, before cutting them down, and laying them in heaps. The little urchin and his mother raised their heads at the sound that Hulot made, as he came down heavily on the near side of the *echalier*. Hulot readily took the young woman for an old one. Wrinkles had come before their time to furrow the skin of the Breton woman's throat and brow; and she was so oddly dressed, in a well-worn goatskin, that if a skirt of dirty yellow canvas had not denoted her sex, Hulot would not have known whether the peasant was a man or a woman, for the long locks of her black hair were hidden away under a red woollen cap. The little urchin's rags scarcely covered him, and his skin showed through them.

"Hollo! old woman," said Hulot in a low voice, as he came up to her. "Where is the Gars?"

The twenty Counter-Chouans who followed him leaped the boundary into the field at that moment.

"Oh! to go to the Gars, you must go back to the place you have come from," the woman replied, after she had given a suspicious glance round at the men.

"Did I ask you the way to the suburb of the Gars at Fougères, old scarecrow?" Hulot answered roughly. "St. Anne of Auray! Have you seen the Gars go by?"

"I do not know what you mean," the woman answered, stooping to go on with her work.

"Do you want the Blues on our track to swallow us up, accursed *garce?*" shouted Hulot.

The woman raised her head at the words, and eyed the Chouans with fresh suspicion as she answered, "How can the Blues be at your heels? I have just seen seven or eight of them going back to Fougères along the road below there."

"Now, would not any one think that she had a mind to bite us?" asked Hulot. "There! look there, old nanny-goat!" The commandant pointed to three or four of his own sentries, some fifty paces behind, whose hats, uniforms, and guns were easily recognizable.

"Do you want the men whom Marche-a-Terre is sending to help the Gars to have their throats cut? The Fougères people want to catch them!" he said angrily.

"Ah! I beg your pardon," the woman answered, "but it is so easy to make a mistake! What parish do you come from?" she asked.

"From Saint George's," cried two or three of the Fougères men in Bas-Breton, "and we are perishing of hunger."

"Very well, stop a moment," said the woman. "Do you see that smoke yonder? My house is there. If you follow the track to the right, you will come out up above it. Perhaps you may meet my husband on the way. Galope-Chopine has to keep a lookout, so as to warn the Gars; for he has come to our house to-day, you know," she added proudly.

"Thanks, good woman," Hulot answered. "Forward!" he added, speaking to his men. "*Tonnerre de Dieu!* We have him now!"

At these words the detachment followed the commandant at a run, down the footpath that had been pointed out to them. But when Galope-Chopine's wife heard the oath, which so little beseemed a Catholic, uttered by the supposed Chouan, she turned pale. She looked at the gaiters and goatskins of the lads from Fougères, sat herself down on the ground, and held her child in a tight embrace, as she said—"May the Holy Virgin of Auray and the blessed St. Labre have mercy upon us! I do not believe that those are our people; their shoes have no nails to them. . . . Run along

the lower road and tell your father about it. His head is at stake," she said to the little boy, who vanished among the broom and furze like a fawn.

Mlle. de Verneuil, however, had met no one belonging to either side upon her way; though Blues and Chouans were hunting each other in the labyrinth of fields that lay round Galope-Chopine's cabin. When she came in sight of the column of bluish smoke which rose from the half-ruined chimney of the wretched dwelling, she felt her heart beating so violently that the quick vibrating throbs seemed to surge into her throat. She stopped, laid her hand on the branch of a tree to steady herself, and gazed at the smoke which was to serve for a beacon alike to the friends and foes of the young chief. Never before had she felt such overwhelming emotion.

"Ah! I love him too much!" she said to herself in a kind of despair; "perhaps to-day I shall have command of myself no longer."

She suddenly crossed the space that lay between her and the hovel, and came into the yard, whose muddy surface was now hard frozen. The great dog flew barking at her, but at a word from Galope-Chopine he ceased, and wagged his tail. As she entered the hut Mlle. de Verneuil gave a comprehensive glance round it. The Marquis was not there. Marie breathed more freely. She was glad to see that the Chouan had made an effort to restore some amount of cleanliness to the one dirty room of his den. Galope-Chopine seized his duckgun, took leave of his visitor without uttering a word, and went out with his dog. Marie went after him as far as the threshold, and watched him turn to the right, when outside his cabin, into a lane, whose entrance was barred by the decayed trunk of a tree that was almost dropping to pieces. From the doorway she could see field beyond field. The bars across their openings made a sort of vista of gateways, for the bareness of the trees and hedges enabled the eye to see the smallest details in the landscape.

As soon as Galope-Chopine's great hat was quite out of

sight, Mlle. de Verneuil went out and turned to the left to gain a view of the church at Fougères; but the shed hid it from her completely. Then she turned her gaze upon the Couesnon valley, which lay beneath her eyes like a great sheet of muslin; its whiteness made the lowering sky, with its gray snow clouds, seem heavier yet. It was one of those days when nature seems to be dumb, and every sound is absorbed by the air; so that although the Blues and Counter-Chouans were traversing the country in three lines, in the form of a triangle that diminished as they came nearer and nearer to the cabin, the silence was so deep that Mlle. de Verneuil felt a trouble caused by her surroundings, and a kind of physical sadness was added to her mental anguish. There was calamity in the air. At last, in a spot where the vista of *echaliers* was screened off by a few trees, she saw a young man leaping over the bars like a squirrel, and running with wonderful speed.

"It is he!" she said to herself.

The Gars was dressed like any other Chouan. His blunderbuss was slung behind him over his goatskin, and but for his grace of movement he would have been unrecognizable. Marie fled into the cabin, acting upon an instinctive impulse as little explainable as fear; but almost immediately the young chief stood at a distance of two paces from her, before the hearth, where a clear and glowing fire was crackling. Neither of them could find a voice; each of them feared to move or to look at the other. One hope united their thoughts; one doubt held them apart—it was agony and it was rapture.

"Sir," said Mlle. de Verneuil at last, in an unsteady voice, "it is only a regard for your safety that has brought me hither."

"For my safety?" he asked, with bitterness in his tones.

"Yes," she replied. "So long as I remain in Fougères your life is imperilled. My love for you is too great to prevent me from going away to-night. You must not seek for me there again."

"You are going away, dear angel?—Then I shall follow you."

"You will follow me? How can you think of it? And how about the Blues?"

"Ah! Marie, my beloved, what connection is there between the Blues and our love?"

"But it seems to me that it is difficult for you to remain in France beside me, and still more difficult for you to leave it with me."

"Is there anything impossible for a lover who is in earnest?"

"Ah! yes. I believe that everything is possible. . . . Have I not had the courage to give you up for your own sake?"

"What! you give yourself to a horrible being whom you did not love, and you will not make the happiness of a man who worships you? A man whose life you would fill, who would swear to be yours forever, and yours only? . . . Listen to me, Marie—do you love me?"

"Yes," she said.

"Then be mine."

"Have you forgotten that I resumed my vile part of courtesan, and that it is *you* who must be mine? If I am determined to fly from you, it is in order that I may not draw down upon your head the scorn that may be poured on mine. Perhaps, but for that fear—"

"But if *I* fear nothing?"

"Who will convince me of it? I am distrustful. Who, in my position, would not be distrustful? If the love that each of us inspires in the other cannot last, let it at least be absolute, so that we may joyfully sustain the burden of the world's injustice. What have you done for my sake? You desire me. Do you think that that raises you very much above the level of others who have hitherto seen me? Have you risked your Chouans for an hour's happiness, taking no more thought for them than I once took for the Blues that were murdered when everything was lost for me? And

what if I were to bid you renounce your ideas, your hopes, your king, of whom I am jealous, and who perhaps will deride you when you die for him, while I could die for you, as a sacred duty? How if I required you to make your submission to the First Consul, so that you might follow me to Paris? . . . How if I ordained that we should go to America, that we might live far away from a world where all is vanity, so that I might know whether you really love me for my own sake, as I love you at this moment? To sum it all up in a word—if I set myself to drag you down to my level instead of raising myself to yours, what would you do?"

"Hush, Marie! do not slander yourself. Poor child, I have read your thoughts. If my first desire became passion, so my passion is now turned into love. Dear soul of my soul, you are as noble as your name, your soul is as lofty as you are beautiful; I know it now. My name is noble enough, and I feel that I myself am great enough to compel the world to accept you. Is this because I feel a presentiment of undreamed-of happiness without an end with you? Is it because I feel that I recognize in you the priceless qualities of soul that constrain us to love one woman forever? I do not know why it is, but my love is infinite, and I feel that I can no longer live without you—that my life would be loathsome to me if you were not always near me."

"What do you mean by 'near you'?"

"Oh, Marie, you will not understand your Alphonse."

"Ah! Do you think to honor me greatly by offering me your name and your hand?" she asked in seeming disdain, fixing her steady eyes upon the Marquis, as if to detect his every thought. "And do you know whether you will love me in six months' time? And what would be my outlook then? . . . No, no; a mistress is the only woman who can be certain of the reality of the feeling that a man shows for her. Duty, and legal sanctions, and the world, and the common interest of children are but sorry aids to her power; for if it is lasting, her pride in it and her happiness will enable

her to endure the heaviest troubles the world can give. To be your wife, and incur the risk of one day being burdensome to you? Rather than face that fear, I choose a transient love, but a love that is true while it lasts, though it should lead to death and misery in the end. Yes, better than any other, could I be a virtuous mother and a devoted wife; but if such sentiments are to dwell for long in a woman's heart, a man must not marry her in a fit of passion. Besides this, do I myself know that I shall care for you to-morrow? No; I will not bring trouble upon you. I am about to leave Brittany," she said, as she noticed that he wavered. "I am going back to Paris, and you must not go thither in search of me—"

"Well, then, if on the morning of the day after to-morrow you see smoke rising from the crags of St. Sulpice, I shall be with you in the evening. I will be your lover, your husband, whatever you would have me be. I shall have dared all things."

"Oh! Alphonse," she cried in her intoxication, "do you love me so well that you will risk your life for me in this way, before you make it mine?"

He made no answer; he looked at her, and she lowered her eyes; but from his mistress's eager face he knew that her fevered frenzy equalled his own, and he held out his arms to her. Carried away by this madness, Marie was about to sink back languidly upon Montauran's breast, determined that the surrender of herself should be an error that should bring her the greatest happiness, since in this way she risked her whole future, which would have been more certain if she had issued victorious from this final ordeal. But as she laid her head on her lover's shoulder, a faint sound echoed outside the house. She tore herself away from him as if she had been suddenly aroused from sleep, and sprang out of the hovel. This enabled her to recover her self-possession to some extent, and to think over her situation.

"He would have taken me, and perhaps have laughed at

me afterward," she said to herself. "Ah! if I could bring myself to believe that, I would kill him. Ah! not just yet!" she added, as she caught sight of Beau-Pied, and made a sign, which the soldier understood with wonderful quickness.

The poor fellow turned on his heel at once and made as though he had seen nothing. Mlle. de Verneuil went suddenly back into the hut, with the first finger of her right hand laid upon her lips in a way that recommended silence to the young chief.

"They are there!" she said, and her voice was low with horror.

"Who is there?"

"The Blues."

"Ah! I will not die without—"

"Yes, take it."

He clasped her, as she stood there cold and powerless, and pressed upon her lips a kiss full of rapture and of ghastly fear, for it might be at once the first kiss and the last. Then together they stood upon the threshold of the door, with their heads in such a position that they could watch everything without being seen. The Marquis saw Gudin at the head of a dozen men holding the foot of the Couësnon valley; then he turned and looked along the vista of *échaliers;* seven soldiers were on guard over the great rotten tree trunk. He climbed upon the cask of cider and broke a hole through the shingle roof, so as to spring out on to the knoll behind the house, but he quickly drew back his head through the gap he had just made, for Hulot, on the summit, had cut off the way to Fougères. He looked for a moment at his mistress, who uttered a despairing cry; for she heard the tramp of the three detachments who had met at last about the house.

"Go out first," he said; "you will save my life."

For her those words were sublime. Full of happiness, she went and stood in the doorway, while the Marquis cocked his blunderbuss. The Gars calculated the distance between the cabin door and the *echalier*, suddenly confronted

the seven Blues, riddled the group with shot, and made his way through their midst. All three detachments flung themselves upon the *echalier* that the chief had just cleared, only to see him running across the field with incredible swiftness.

"Fire! fire! in the devil's name! You are no Frenchmen! Fire, you wretches!" thundered Hulot.

As he called these words from the top of the knoll, his own men and Gudin's troop fired a volley pointblank, which, luckily, was badly aimed. The Marquis had already reached the *echalier* at the other end of the nearest field, and was just entering the next, when he was all but overtaken by Gudin, who had flung himself after him in hot pursuit. When the Gars heard the footsteps of his formidable antagonist not many yards behind him, he redoubled his speed; but in spite of this both Gudin and the Marquis reached the third *echalier* almost at the same time. Montauran adroitly flung his blunderbuss at Gudin's head, and struck the Counter-Chouan a blow that made him slacken his pace. It is impossible to describe Marie's agony of mind, and the intense interest with which Hulot and his troops watched this spectacle, each one unconsciously imitating the gestures of the two runners in a dead silence. The Gars and Gudin both reached the screen of copse, now white with hoarfrost, when the officer suddenly fell back and disappeared behind an apple tree. Some score of Chouans, who had not dared to fire for fear of killing their leader, now appeared, and riddled the tree with balls. All Hulot's little band set out at a run to rescue Gudin, who, being without weapons, fled toward them from one apple tree to another, choosing the moments when the Chasseurs du Roi were reloading for his flight. He was not long in jeopardy. The Counter-Chouans joined the Blues; and, with Hulot at their head, they came to the young officer's assistance just at the place where the Marquis had flung away his blunderbuss.

As they came up, Gudin caught a glimpse of his foe, who was sitting exhausted beneath one of the trees in the little copse; and leaving his comrades to shoot from behind their

cover at the Chouans who were intrenched behind a hedge along the side of the field, he made a circuit round them and went in the direction of the Marquis with the eagerness of a beast of prey. When the Chasseurs du Roi saw his manœuvre they uttered fearful yells to warn their chief of his danger; then, after firing a round at the Counter-Chouans, with poacher's luck, they tried to hold their own against them; but the Counter-Chouans boldly climbed the bank which served their enemies as a rampart, and took a murderous revenge. Upon this the Chouans made for the road that ran beside the inclosure in which the skirmish had taken place, and made themselves masters of the high ground, abandoned by a blunder of Hulot's. Before the Blues knew where they were, the Chouans had intrenched themselves among the gaps in the crests of the rocks; and thus sheltered, they could pick off Hulot's men in safety, should the latter show any disposition to follow them thither, and thus prolong the fight.

While Hulot and a few of his soldiers were going slowly toward the copse in seach of Gudin, the men of Fougères stayed behind to strip the dead, and despatch the living Chouans, for no prisoners were made on either side in this terrible war. The Marquis being in safety, both Chouans and Blues recognized the strength of their respective positions, and the futility of continuing the struggle, so that neither party now thought of anything but of beating a retreat.

"If I lose this young man," Hulot exclaimed, as he carefully scanned the copse, "I will never make another friend."

"Oho!" said one of the lads from Fougères, "there's a bird here with yellow feathers," and he held up for his fellow-countrymen's inspection a purse full of gold pieces that he had just found in the pocket of a stout man in black clothes.

"But what have we here?" asked another, as he drew a breviary from the dead man's overcoat. "Here be holy

goods; this is a priest!" he exclaimed, as he flung the breviary down.

"The robber! He will make bankrupts of us!" said a third, who had only found two crowns of six francs each in the pockets of the Chouan that he was stripping.

"Yes, but he has a famous pair of shoes," said a soldier, who made as though he would help himself to them.

"You shall have them if they fall to your share," a Fougerais answered, as he dragged them off the feet of the dead Chouan, and flung them down on a pile of goods already heaped together.

A fourth Counter-Chouan took charge of the money, so as to divide it when the soldiers belonging to the party should return. Hulot came back with the young officer, whose last attempt to come up with the Gars had been as useless as it was dangerous, and found a score of his own men and some thirty Counter-Chouans standing round eleven of their dead foes, whose bodies had been flung into a furrow below the hedge.

"Soldiers!" Hulot shouted sternly; "I forbid you to take any part of those rags. Fall in, and look sharp about it!"

"It is all very well about the money, commandant," said one of the men, exhibiting for Hulot's benefit a pair of shoes out of which his five bare toes were protruding; "but those shoes would fit me like a glove," he went on, pointing the butt end of his gun at the pair of iron-bound shoes before him.

"So you want a pair of English shoes on your feet!" was Hulot's reply.

"But ever since the war began we have always shared the booty—" began one of the Fougerais in a respectful voice. Hulot broke in upon him roughly with—"You fellows can follow your customs; I make no objection."

"Wait a bit, Gudin, there is a purse here, and it is not so badly off for louis; you have been at some trouble, so your chief will not object to your taking it," said one of his old comrades, addressing the officer.

Hulot, in annoyance, looked at Gudin, and saw him turn pale.

"It is my uncle's purse!" the young fellow exclaimed. Exhausted and weary as he was, he went a step or two toward the heap of bodies, and the first that met his eyes happened to be that of his own uncle. He had scarcely caught sight of the florid face, now furrowed with bluish lines, of the gunshot wound and the stiffened arms, when a smothered cry broke from him, and he said, "Let us march, commandant!"

The Blues set off, Hulot supporting his young friend, who leaned upon his arm. "*Tonnerre de Dieu!*" said the old soldier. "Never mind!"

"But he is dead!" Gudin replied; "he is dead! He was the only relation I had left, and though he cursed me, he was fond of me. If the King had come back, the whole country would have wanted my head, but the old fellow's cassock would have screened me."

"What a fool!" remarked the National Guards, who stayed behind to divide the booty; "the old boy was well off, and, as things fell out, he had not time to make a will to disinherit his nephew."

When the plunder had been divided, the Counter-Chouans started after the little battalion of Blues, and followed after them at a distance.

As the day wore away, there was a dreadful sense of uneasiness in Galope-Chopine's hovel, where life had hitherto been so simple and so free from anxiety. Barbette and her little lad went home at the hour when the family usually took their evening meal; the one bore a heavy burden of furze, and the other a bundle of fodder for the cattle. Mother and son entered the hut, and looked round in vain for Galope-Chopine. Never had their wretched room looked so large to them nor seemed so empty. The fireless hearth, the darkness and the stillness all foreboded calamity of some kind.

At nightfall Barbette hastened to light a bright fire and

two *oribus*—for so they call their resin candles in the country that lies between the shores of Armorica and the district of the Upper Loire, and the word is in use even on this side of Amboise in the Vendômois.

Barbette set about her preparations with the deliberation that characterizes all actions performed under the influence of deep feeling. She listened to the slightest sound; the wailing of the gusts of wind often deceived her, and brought her to the door of her wretched hovel, only that she might go sadly back again. She rinsed a couple of pitchers, filled them with cider, and set them on the long table of walnut wood. Again and again she looked at her little boy, who was watching the baking of the buckwheat cakes, but she could not bring herself to speak a word to him. Once the little lad fixed his eyes upon the nails in the wall from which his father was wont to hang his duck gun, and Barbette shuddered when she noticed, as he had also noticed, that the space was vacant. The silence was unbroken save for the lowing of the cows, and the sound at regular intervals of the drippings from the cider barrel. The poor woman sighed as she poured out into three brown earthenware porringers a sort of soup, made of milk, cakes cut into dice, and cooked chestnuts.

"They fought in the field that belongs to La Beraudière," said the little boy.

"Go and have a look there," his mother answered.

The little fellow ran off, and made out the faces of the heap of dead by the moonlight; his father was not among them, and he came back whistling joyfully, for he had picked up a few coins that the victors had overlooked and trampled into the mud. He found his mother busy spinning hemp, seated upon a stool by the fireside. He shook his head at the sight of Barbette, who did not dare to believe in any good news. It was ten o'clock by St. Leonard's Church, and the little fellow went to bed, after lisping his prayer to the Holy Virgin of Auray. At daybreak Barbette, who had not slept all night, gave a cry of joy as she

heard a sound in the distance that she recognized; it was Galope-Chopine's step and his heavy iron-bound shoes, and he himself soon showed his sullen countenance.

"Thanks to St. Labre, to whom I have promised a fine wax-candle, the Gars is saved! Do not forget that we now owe three candles to the saint."

With that Galope-Chopine seized upon a pitcher and gulped down the contents without taking a breath. When his wife had put the soup before him, and had helped him to rid himself of his duck gun, he seated himself on the bench of walnut wood and said, as he drew near the fire, "How could the Blues and Counter-Chouans have come here? There was a fight going on at Florigny. What devil can have told them that the Gars was in our house? Nobody knew about it except us, and the Gars, and that pretty lass of his."

The woman turned pale.

"The Counter-Chouans made me believe that they were the *gars* from Saint Georges," she made answer, trembling, "and I myself told them where the Gars was."

Now it was Galope-Chopine's turn to grow pale; he set his porringer down on the edge of the table.

"I sent our little chap to warn you," the terrified Barbette went on; "he did not find you."

The Chouan rose to his feet and dealt his wife such a violent blow that she fell back half dead upon the bed.

"Accursed *garce*," he said, "you have killed me!"

Then terror seized him, and he took his wife in his arms. "Barbette!" he cried, "Barbette! . . . Holy Virgin! My hand was too heavy!"

"Do you think that Marche-a-Terre will get to know about it?" she said, when she opened her eyes again.

"The Gars has given orders for an inquiry to be made, so as to know where the treachery came from," answered the Chouan.

"Did he tell Marche-a-Terre?"

"Pille-Miche and Marche-a-Terre were at Florigny."

Barbette breathed more freely.

"If they touch a single hair of your head," she said, "I will rinse their glasses with vinegar."

"Ah! I have no appetite now!" Galope-Chopine exclaimed dejectedly.

His wife set another full pitcher before him, but he gave no heed to it. Two great tears left their traces on Barbette's cheeks, and moistened the wrinkles on her withered face.

"Listen, wife. To-morrow morning you must make a heap of fagots on the crags of St. Sulpice to the right of St. Leonard, and set fire to them. That is the signal agreed upon between the Gars and the old *recteur* of Saint Georges, who will come and say a mass for him."

"Is he going to Fougères?"

"Yes. He is going to see his pretty lass, and on that account I shall have running about to do to-day. I am pretty sure that he means to marry her and to take her away with him, for he told me to hire horses and to have them ready all along the Saint Malo Road." Thereupon Galope-Chopine, being tired out, went to bed for a few hours, and afterward went about his errands.

He came in again the next morning, having faithfully carried out the Marquis's instructions; and when he learned that Marche-a-Terre and Pille-Miche had not put in an appearance, he dispelled his wife's fears, so that she set out for the crags of St. Sulpice with an almost easy mind. On the previous evening she had made a pile of fagots, now white with rime, upon the knoll that faced the suburb of St. Leonard. She held her child by the hand, and the little fellow carried some glowing ashes in a broken sabot.

His wife and son had hardly disappeared behind the shed, when Galope-Chopine heard two men jump over the last of the series of *échaliers*. By degrees he made out two angular figures, looking like vague shadows in a tolerably thick fog.

"There are Pille-Miche and Marche-a-Terre," he said within himself, and trembled as the two Chouans showed their dark countenances in the little yard. Beneath their

huge battered hats they looked not unlike the foreground figures that engravers put into landscapes.

"Good-day, Galope-Chopine," said Marche-a-Terre soberly.

"Good-day, M. Marche-a-Terre," Barbette's husband respectfully answered. "Will you come inside and empty a pitcher or two? I have cold cakes and fresh butter here."

"That is not to be refused, cousin," said Pille-Miche, and the two Chouans came in. There was nothing to alarm Galope-Chopine in this beginning; he hastened to his great cider butt and filled three pitchers, while Marche-a-Terre and Pille-Miche, seated upon the polished bench on either side of the long table, cut slices of the cakes for themselves, and spread them with the rich yellow butter that exuded little beads of milk under the pressure of the knife. Galope-Chopine set the foaming pitchers full of cider before his visitors, and the three Chouans fell to; but from time to time the master of the house cast a sidelong glance at Marche-a-Terre as he eagerly satisfied his thirst.

"Pass me your snuff-box," Marche-a-Terre remarked to Pille-Miche.

The Breton gave it a few vigorous shakes, till several pinches lay in the hollow of his hand, then he snuffed the powdered tobacco like a man who wished to fortify himself for serious business.

"It is cold," Pille-Miche remarked, and rose to shut the upper part of the door.

The dim foggy daylight now only entered the room through the little window, so that only the table and the two benches were faintly visible, but the red glow of the firelight filled the place. Galope-Chopine had just refilled the pitchers and had set them before his guests; but they declined to drink, flung their large hats aside, and suddenly assumed a solemn expression. This gesture and the look by which they took counsel of each other sent a shudder through Galope-Chopine, who seemed to read thoughts of bloodshed lurking beneath those red woollen bonnets.

"Bring us your hatchet," said Marche-a-Terre.

"But what do you want with it, M. Marche-a-Terre?"

"Come, cousin, you know quite well that you are doomed," said Pille-Miche, putting away the snuff-box that Marche-a-Terre had returned to him.

Both of the Chouans got up together and seized their carbines.

"M. Marche-a-Terre, I did not say *one word* about the Gars."

"Get your hatchet, I tell you," was the Chouan's answer.

The wretched Galope-Chopine stumbled over his child's rough bedstead, and three five-franc pieces fell out on to the floor. Pille-Miche picked them up.

"Oho! the Blues have given you new coin!" cried Marche-a-Terre.

"I have not said one word; that is as true as that St. Labre's image stands there," Galope-Chopine replied. "Barbette mistook the Counter-Chouans for the gars from Saint-Georges; that was all."

"Why do you prate about your business to your wife?" Marche-a-Terre answered roughly.

"And besides, we don't ask you for excuses, cousin; we want your hatchet. You are doomed."

At a sign from his comrade, Pille-Miche helped him to seize the victim. Galope-Chopine's courage broke down when he found himself in the hands of the Chouans. He fell on his knees and held up his despairing hands to his executioners. "Good friends," he cried, "and you, cousin, what will become of my little lad?"

"I will look after him," said Marche-a-Terre.

"Dear comrades," Galope-Chopine began again with blanched cheeks, "I am not ready for death. Will you send me out of the world without shrift? You have the right to take my life, but you have no right to rob me of eternal bliss."

"That is true," said Marche-a-Terre, as he looked at Pille-Miche.

The two Chouans remained in this most awkward predicament for a moment or two, in utter inability to resolve the case of conscience. Galope-Chopine, meanwhile, listened to the slightest noise made by the wind, as if he had not yet lost all hope. He looked mechanically at the cider butt; the regular sound of the dripping leakage made him heave a melancholy sigh. Suddenly Pille-Miche clutched the sufferer's arm, drew him into a corner, and said to him —"Confess your sins to me. I will repeat them to a priest of the true Church, and he will give me absolution; if there is any penance, I will do it for you."

Galope-Chopine obtained some respite by the way in which he made his confession; but in spite of the number of his sins and the full account which he gave of them, he came at last to the end of the list.

"Alas!" he said, when he had finished, "since I am speaking to you, my cousin, as to a confessor, I affirm to you, by the holy name of God, that I have nothing to reproach myself with, unless it is that I have now and then buttered my bread a little too well; and I call St. Labre over there above the chimney-piece to bear witness that I have not said a word about the Gars. No, my friends, I did not betray him."

"All right, get up, cousin; you will explain all that to the *bon Dieu* when the time comes."

"Let me say one little word of good-by to Barbe—"

"Come, now," said Marche-a-Terre, "if you want us not to think more ill of you than we can help, behave yourself like a Breton, and die decently."

The two Chouans seized on Galope-Chopine again, and stretched him on the bench, where he lay making no sign of resistance save convulsive movements prompted by physical fear; there was a heavy thud of the hatchet, and a sudden end of his smothered cries; his head had been struck off at a blow. Marche-a-Terre took it up by a lock of hair, and went out of the hut. He looked about him and found a great nail in the doorway, about which he twisted the

strand of hair, and so suspended the bloody head, without even closing the eyes. The two Chouans washed their hands leisurely in a great earthen pan, full of water, put on their hats, took up their carbines, and sprang over the *échalier*, whistling the tune of the ballad of "The Captain." At the end of the field Pille-Miche began in a hoarse voice to sing some odd stanzas of the simple poem—

The first town that they came until
  Her lover has lighted down,
And he has clad that bonny lass
  In a milk-white satin gown:

The next town that they came until
  He has lighted, her lover bold,
And he has clad her in white silver
  And in the ruddy gold:

But when she came to his regiment,
  So fair a maid to greet,
They have taken webs of the silken cloth
  To spread them beneath her feet.

As the Chouans went further and further away, the tune grew less distinct; but there was such a deep silence over the country side that a note here and there reached Barbette as she returned to the cabin, holding her little boy by the hand. No peasant woman can hear this song with indifference, so popular is it in the west of France. Barbette therefore unconsciously took up the earlier verses of the ballad—

We must away, bonny lassie,
  For we have far to ride;
We must away to the wars, lassie,
  I may no longer bide.

Spare thy trouble, oh, bold captain!
  Save that treason give her thee,
She shall not be thine in any land,
  Nor yet upon the sea!

Her father has stripped her of her weed
  And flung her into the wave,
But the captain has swum out cannily
  His lady-love to save.

We must away, bonny lassie, etc.

Barbette came into her yard just as she had reached the place in the ballad at which Pille-Miche had taken it up; her tongue was suddenly petrified, she stood motionless, and a loud cry, which she instantly repressed, came from her open mouth.

"Mother, dear, what is the matter?" asked the little one.

"You must go alone," cried Barbette in a choking voice, as she withdrew her hand from his, and pushed him from her with indescribable roughness. "You have a father and mother no longer!"

The child rubbed his shoulder, but he caught sight of the head as he cried, and, though his pink and white face was still puckered by the nervous twitch that tears give to the features, he grew silent. He stared wide-eyed for a long while at his father's head, with a stolid expression that revealed no emotion whatever; his face, brutalized by ignorance, at last came to wear a look of savage curiosity. At last Barbette suddenly took her child's hand in a powerful grip, and hurried him into the house. One of Galope-Chopine's shoes had fallen off when Pille-Miche and Marche-a-Terre had stretched him on the bench; it had lain beneath his neck, and was filled with blood. This was the first thing that met the widow's eyes.

"Take off your sabot," the mother said to her son, "and put your foot in that. Good! Always remember your father's shoe," she cried in piteous tones. "Never set a shoe on your foot without remembering how this one was full of blood that the *Chuins* spilled, and kill the *Chuins!*"

She shook her head so violently as she spoke that the long locks of her black hair fell about her throat and gave her face a sinister look.

"I call St. Labre to witness," she went on, "that I dedicate you to the Blues. You shall be a soldier, so that you may avenge your father. Kill them! Kill the *Chuins*, and do as I do. Ah! they have taken my husband's head, and I will give the head of the Gars to the Blues."

She sprang to the bed at a bound, drew a little bag of

money from its hiding-place, took her astonished child by the hand, and dragged him forcibly with her, not even leaving him time to put on his sabot again. Then they both set out for Fougères at a quick pace, neither of them giving a look behind them at the cottage they were forsaking. When they reached the summit of the crags of St. Sulpice, Barbette stirred up her fire of fagots, and her little son helped her to pile on bushes of green broom with the rime upon them, so as to increase the volume of smoke.

"That will outlast your father's life, and mine, and the Gars' too!" said Barbette savagely, as she pointed out the fire to her child.

While Galope-Chopine's widow and son, with his foot dyed in blood, were watching the eddying smoke-wreaths with brooding looks of vengeance and curiosity, Mlle. de Verneuil's eyes were fastened on the crag. She tried, in vain, to discern the signal there of which the Marquis had spoken. The fog had grown gradually denser, and the whole district was enveloped in a gray veil that hid the outlines of the landscape, even at a little distance from the town. She looked with fond anxiety at the crags and the castle, and at the buildings that loomed through the heavy air like darker masses of the fog itself. A few trees round about her window stood out against the bluish background, like branching corals dimly seen in the depths of a calm sea. The sun had given to the sky the yellowish hues of tarnished silver, its rays shed a vague red color over the bare branches of the trees, where a few last withered leaves were hanging yet. But Marie felt an agitation of soul too delightful to allow her to draw dark auguries from this scene; it was too much out of harmony with the happiness to come, of which, in thought, she took her fill.

Her ideas had altered strangely in the past two days. Slowly the fierceness and uncontrolled outbursts of her passions had been subdued by the influence of the even warmth that true love brings into a life. The certain knowledge that she was beloved, for which she had sought through so many

perils, had awakened in her a desire to return within the limits in which society sanctions happiness—limits which despair alone had led her to overstep. A love that only lasts for the space of a moment seemed to her to betoken weakness of soul. She had a sudden vision of herself, withdrawn from the depths wherein misfortune had plunged her, and restored again to the high position in which she had been placed by her father. Her vanity awoke, after being repressed by the cruel vicissitudes of a passion that had met at times with happiness and again at times with scorn. She saw all the advantages conferred by an exalted rank. When she was married to Montauran, and came into the world (so to speak) as a marquise, would she not live and act in the sphere to which she naturally belonged? She could appreciate better than other women the greatness of the feelings and thoughts that underlie family life; for she had known the chances of a life of continual adventure. The responsibilities and cares of marriage and motherhood would for her be a rest rather than a burden. She looked forward longingly, through this last storm, to a quiet and virtuous life, as a woman tired of virtuous conduct might give a covetous glance at an illicit passion. Virtue for her possessed a new attraction. She turned away from the window, for she could not see the fire on the crags of St. Sulpice.

"Perhaps I have coquetted overmuch with him? But was it not in this way that I learned how well I was beloved? —Francine, it is a dream no longer! To-night I shall be the Marquise de Montauran! What can I have done to deserve such entire happiness? Oh! I love him—and love alone can requite love. And yet, it is God's purpose doubtless to reward me, because I have kept so much love in my heart through so many miseries; and to make me forget all that I have suffered, for I have suffered greatly, as you know, dear child."

"You, Marie! You to-night the Marquise de Montauran? Ah! until it is over and done, I shall think that I am dreaming. Who taught him to know your worth?"

"But he has not only a handsome face, dear child; he has a soul too! If you had seen him in danger, as I did! Ah! he is so brave, he needs must know how to love well!"

"If you love him so much, why do you allow him to come to Fougères?"

"Had we time to say a word to each other before we were surprised? Besides that, is it not one more proof of his love? Can one ever have enough of them? . . . Do my hair. He will not be here yet."

But stormy thoughts still mingled themselves with the anxieties of coquetry, and again and again she spoiled the carefully arranged effects, as her hair was dressed, by movements that seemed to be electric. As she shook out a curl into waves, or smoothed the glossy plaits, a trace of mistrust made her ask herself whether the Marquis was playing her false. And then came the thought that such baseness would be unfathomable, for in coming to seek her at Fougères he had boldly laid himself open to swift and condign punishment. She studied keenly in the mirror the effects of a side glance, of a smile, of a slight contraction of her brows, of a gesture of anger, scorn, or love; seeking in this way for a woman's wile that should probe the young chief's heart, even at the last moment.

"You are right, Francine," said she. "Like you, I wish that the marriage was over. This is the last of my overclouded days—it is big with my death or our happiness. This fog is detestable," she added, looking afresh at the summits of St. Sulpice that were still hidden from her.

With her own hands she arranged the curtains of silk and muslin that draped the window, taking a pleasure in shutting out the daylight, and so producing a soft gloom in the chamber.

"Take away those knick-knacks that cover the chimney-piece, Francine," she said; "leave nothing there but the clock and the two Dresden vases. I myself will put into them those winter flowers that Corentin found for me. Take all the chairs out of the room; I only care to keep the arm-

chair and the sofa; and when you have done these things, child, brush the carpet, to make the colors look brighter, and put candles in the sconces by the fireside, and in the candlesticks."

Marie looked long and closely at the ancient tapestry that covered the walls of the room. Her innate taste discovered among the vivid colors of the warp the hues which could serve to bring this decoration of a bygone day into harmony with the furniture and accessories of the boudoir—hues which either repeated their colors or made a charming contrast with them. The same idea pervaded her arrangement of the flowers with which she filled the fantastic vases about the room. The sofa was drawn up to the fire. Upon two gilded tables on either side of the bed, which stood near the wall opposite to the chimney-piece, she set great Dresden vases filled with leafage and sweet-scented flowers. More than once she trembled as she arranged the voluminous folds of green silk brocade about the bed, and followed with her eyes the curving lines of the flowered pattern on the coverlet which she laid over it. About such preparations there is an indefinable secret happiness, a delightful stimulation that causes a woman to forget all her doubts in the pleasure of her task, as Mlle. de Verneuil did at this moment. Is there not a kind of religious sentiment about the innumerable pains thus undertaken to please a beloved being, who is not there to behold them and to recompense them; but who must, later on, feel the significance of these charming preparations, and repay them with an approving smile? In moments like these, women give themselves up to love in advance, so to speak. There is not one who does not say to herself, as Mlle. de Verneuil said in her thought, "I shall be very happy to-night." The most innocent among them at such times sets this sweet hope in the least folds of the silk or muslin, and the harmony that she establishes about her steeps the whole of her surroundings in an atmosphere of love. All things in this delicious world of her creation become living beings and onlookers; she already makes them accomplices in her happi-

ness to come. At each movement and at each thought she grows bold to rob the future. Soon her hopes and expectations cease, and she reproaches the silence. She must needs take the slightest sound for a presage, till doubt, at last, sets his talons in her heart, and she feels the torture of a burning thought that surges within her, and that brings something like a physical strain to bear upon her. Without the sustaining hope of joy, she could never bear those alternations of exultation and of anguish. Time after time Mlle. de Verneuil had drawn the curtains aside, hoping to see a column of smoke rising above the rocks; but the fog appeared to grow grayer every moment, until at last its grisly hues affected her imagination, and seemed to be full of evil augury. In a moment of impatience she let the curtain fall, and vowed to herself that she would not raise it again. She looked discontentedly round the room for which she had found a soul and a language, asked herself whether her preparations had all been made in vain, and fell to pondering over them, at the thought.

She drew Francine into the adjoining dressing-closet, in which there was a round casement looking out upon the dimly visible corner of the cliffs where the fortifications of the town joined the rocks of the promenade.

"Little one," she said, "put this in order for me, and let everything be fresh and neat! You may leave the salon in disorder, if you will," she added, with one of the smiles that women keep for those who know them best, with a subtle delicacy in it that men can never understand.

"Ah! how lovely you look!" cried the little Breton maid.

"Eh! fools that we all are, is not our lover our fairest ornament?"

Francine left her stretched languidly on the sofa. As she went out slowly step by step, she began to see that whether her mistress was beloved or no, she would never betray Montauran.

"Are you sure about this yarn of yours, old woman?" said Hulot to Barbette, who had recognized him as she came into Fougères.

"Have you eyes in your head? There! look over there at the rocks of St. Sulpice, master, to the right of St. Leonard!"

Corentin scanned the ridge in the direction indicated by Barbette's finger; the fog began to clear off a little, so that he could distinctly see the column of pale smoke of which Galope-Chopine's widow had spoken.

"But when is he coming? Eh, old woman? This evening, or to-night?"

"I know nothing about it, master," Barbette answered.

"Why do you betray your own side?" asked Hulot sharply, when he had drawn the peasant woman a few paces away from Corentin.

"Ah! my lord general, look at my lad's foot! See, it is dipped in my husband's blood! The *Chuins* butchered him like a calf, begging your pardon, to punish him for those three words that you got out of me when I was at work the day before yesterday. Take my gars, since you have made him fatherless and motherless, but make a thorough Blue of him, master, so that he may kill many *Chuins!* Look, here are two hundred crowns. Take charge of them for him. With care, they ought to last him a long time, for it took his father twelve years to get them together."

Hulot stared in amazement at the peasant woman. Her wrinkled face was white, and her eyes were tearless.

"But what will become of you yourself, mother? It would be better if you took charge of the money yourself."

She shook her head sadly. "I need nothing more now. You might clap me into the dungeons below Melusina's tower there" (and she pointed to one of the towers of the castle), "and the *Chuins* would find means to get at me and kill me there!"

She clasped her little lad in her arms, and her brow was

dark with pain as she looked at him; two tears fell from her eyes, and with one more look at him she vanished.

"Commandant," said Corentin, "here is an opportunity, and if we mean to profit by it, we shall require two hard heads rather than one. We know everything, and yet we know nothing. If we were to encompass Mlle. de Verneuil's house at once, we should set her against us, and you and I, and your Counter-Chouans, and both your battalions all put together, would be no match for that girl, if she has taken it into her head to save her *ci-devant*. The fellow is a courtier, and consequently he is crafty; he is a young man moreover, and mettlesome. We could never get possession of him as he enters Fougères; he may possibly be in Fougères already. And as for making domiciliary visits, the thing would be absurd! We should not take anything by it; it would give the alarm, and it would plague the townspeople."

"I shall order the sentry on guard at St. Leonard to lengthen his round by two or three paces," said Hulot, out of patience; "in that way he will come in front of Mlle. de Verneuil's house. I shall arrange for every sentinel to give a signal, and I myself shall wait in the guardhouse. Then when they let me know that any young man whatever has entered the town, I shall take a corporal and four men with me, and—"

"And how if the young man is not the Marquis after all?" said Corentin, interrupting the impetuous soldier. "How if the Marquis enters by none of the gates? If he is in Mlle. de Verneuil's house already? If—if—"

Corentin looked at the commandant with an air of superiority in which there was something so offensive that the old soldier exclaimed—"*Mille tonnerres de Dieu!* Go about your business, citizen of hell! What is all that to me? If this cockchafer tumbles into one of my guardhouses, there is no help for it, but I must shoot him; if I hear that he is in a house, there is no help for it, but I must search the house and take him and shoot him. But the devil fetch me if I will cudgel my brains to soil my uniform—"

"Commandant, the letter from the three ministers orders you to obey Mlle. de Verneuil."

"Let her come to me herself, citizen, and then I will see what I will do."

"Very good, citizen," Corentin answered stiffly; "she will not be very long about it. She shall tell you herself the hour and the minute when the *ci-devant* comes. Possibly she will not be content until she has seen you post the sentries and surround her house!"

"He is the devil incarnate!" said Hulot plaintively, as he watched Corentin stride back up the Queen's Staircase, where all this had taken place, and reach St. Leonard's Gate. "He is for betraying the citizen Montauran to me, bound hand and foot," the chief of demi-brigade went on, speaking to himself, "and I shall have the plague of presiding at a court-martial. After all," said he, with a shrug of his shoulders, "the Gars is an enemy of the Republic; he killed my poor friend Gérard, and in any case he is an aristocrat. But the devil take it!"

He turned quickly on his heel, and set out to go the rounds of the town, whistling the Marseillaise as he went.

Mlle. de Verneuil was steeped in those musings whose secrets lie buried, as it were, in the inmost depths of the soul; musings made up of numberless thoughts and emotions at war with one another, which have often proved to those who have suffered from them that a stormy and passionate life may be lived within four walls; nay, without even leaving the ottoman whereon existence is burning itself away. The girl who was now face to face with the catastrophe of a drama of her own seeking reviewed each scene of love or anger that had stimulated life so powerfully during the ten days that had elapsed since she first met the Marquis. While she mused, the sound of a man's footstep, echoing in the adjoining salon, made her tremble; the door opened, she turned her head quickly, and saw Corentin.

"Little trickster!" said the superior agent of police, "so

you still have a mind to deceive me? Oh! Marie! Marie! you are playing a very dangerous game when you determine on the strokes without consulting me, and do not attach me to your interests! If the Marquis has escaped his fate—"

"It has been through no fault of yours, is not that what you mean?" said Mlle. de Verneuil with poignant irony. "What right have you to enter my house a second time?" she went on severely.

"*Your* house?" he queried in bitter tones.

"You remind me," she replied with dignity, "that I am not in my own house. Perhaps you deliberately chose it out, so that you might the more surely do your murderous work here? I will go out of it. I would go out into a desert rather than receive—"

"Spies—speak out!" Corentin concluded. "But this house is neither yours nor mine; it belongs to the Government; and as for leaving it," he added, with a diabolical glance at her, "you will do nothing of the kind."

An indignant impulse brought Mlle. de Verneuil to her feet. She made a step or two toward him, but suddenly came to a standstill, for she saw Corentin raise the curtain over the window, and the smile with which he asked her to rejoin him.

"Do you see that column of smoke?" he said, with the unshaken calmness which he knew how to preserve in his haggard face, however deeply his feelings had been stirred.

"What connection can there possibly be between my departure and those weeds that they are burning?" she inquired.

"Why is your voice so changed?" asked Corentin. "Poor little thing," he added in gentle tones, "I know everything! The Marquis is coming to Fougères to-day; and you had no purpose in your mind of giving him up to us when you set this boudoir in such festive array, with flowers and lights."

Mlle. de Verneuil turned pale. She read Montauran's

death warrant in the eyes of this tiger in human shape, and the love within her for her lover grew to frenzy. Every hair of her head seemed to be a source of hideous and intolerable pain, and she sank down upon the ottoman. For a moment Corentin stood with his arms folded across his chest. He was half-pleased at the sight of a torture which avenged all the sarcasms and scorn that the woman before him had heaped upon his head, half-vexed to see a being suffer whose yoke he had liked to bear, heavily though it had lain on him.

"She loves him!" he said in a smothered voice.

"*Loves him!*" she cried; "what does that word signify? . . . Corentin, he is my life, my soul, my very breath—"

The man's calmness appalled her; she flung herself at his feet.

"Sordid soul!" she cried; "I would rather abase myself to obtain his life than abase myself to take it! Save him I will, at the price of every drop of blood in me. Speak! What do you want?"

Corentin trembled.

"I came to take my orders from you, Marie," he said, in dulcet tones, as he raised her with polished grace. "Yes, Marie, your insults will not check my devotion to you, provided that you never deceive me again. As you know, Marie, no one ever fools me and goes scathless."

"Oh! if you want me to love you, Corentin, help me to save him!"

"Well, when is the Marquis coming?" he said, forcing himself to ask the question calmly.

"Alas! I do not know."

They both looked at each other in silence.

"I am lost!" said Mlle. de Verneuil to herself.

"She is playing me false," thought Corentin. "Marie," he went on, "I have two maxims: one is, never to believe a word that women say—which is the way to avoid being gulled by them; and the other is, always to seek to discover whether they have not some motive for doing the very oppo-

site of the thing they say, and for behaving in a fashion the very reverse of the course of action which they are kind enough to disclose to us in confidence. Now, we understand each other, I think."

"Admirably," replied Mlle. de Verneuil. "You require proofs of my good faith; but I am holding them back until you shall give me proofs of yours."

"Good-by, mademoiselle," said Corentin dryly.

"Come," the girl said, smiling at him, "sit down. Seat yourself there, and do not be sulky, or I shall readily find means to save the Marquis without your aid. As for the three hundred thousand francs that are always spread out before your eyes, I can lay them there upon the chimney-piece, in gold, for you the moment that the Marquis is in safety."

Corentin rose to his feet, drew back several paces, and looked at Mlle. de Verneuil.

"You have grown rich in a very short time!" said he, with ill-concealed bitterness in his tones.

"Montauran himself could offer you very much more for his ransom," said Marie, with a pitying smile. "So prove to me that it is in your power to protect him against all dangers, and—"

"Could you not arrange for him to escape the very moment that he arrives," Corentin exclaimed suddenly, "for Hulot does not know the hour, and—"

He broke off as though he blamed himself for having said too much.

"But can it be that *you* are asking me for a stratagem?" he went on, smiling in the most natural manner. "Listen, Marie, I am certain of your good faith. Promise that you will make good to me all that I am losing by serving you, and I will see that that blockhead of a commandant shall sleep so soundly that the Marquis will be as much at liberty here in Fougères as in Saint James itself."

"I give you my word," the girl said, with a kind of solemnity.

"Not in that way though," he said. "Swear it by your mother."

Mlle. de Verneuil shivered; then she raised a trembling hand and took the oath the man required of her. His manners underwent an instant change.

"You may do what you will with me," said Corentin. "Do not deceive me, and you will bless me this evening."

"I believe you, Corentin!" exclaimed Mlle. de Verneuil, quite softened toward him.

She bowed graciously as she took leave of him, and there was a kindliness not unmingled with wonder in her smile, when she saw the expression of melancholy tenderness on his face.

"What an entrancing creature!" cried Corentin, as he withdrew. "And is she never to be mine, never to be the instrument of my fortune and the source of my pleasures? To think that *she* should throw herself at my feet! . . . Yes, the Marquis shall die; and if I can only obtain her by plunging her in the mire, I will thrust her down into it. Yet, it is possible that she mistrusts me no longer," he said to himself as he reached the square, whither he had unconsciously bent his steps. "A hundred thousand crowns at a moment's notice! She thinks that I covet money. It is a trick of hers, or else she has married him."

Corentin did not venture to resolve on anything; he was lost in thought. The fog, which the sun had partially dispelled at noon, gradually thickened again, and grew so dense at last that Corentin could no longer see the trees, though they were only a short distance from him.

"Here is a fresh piece of bad luck," he said to himself, as he went slowly back to his lodging. "It is impossible to see anything six paces off. The weather is shielding our lovers. How is a house to be watched when it is enveloped in such a fog as this? Who goes there?" he called, as he caught an arm belonging to some unknown person, who had apparently scrambled up on to the Promenade over the most dangerous places of the rock.

"It is I," was the guileless answer in a child's voice.

"Ah! it is the little red-foot lad. Do you not want to avenge your father?" Corentin asked.

"Yes!" cried the child.

"Good. Do you know the Gars when you see him?"

"Yes."

"Better still. Now keep with me, and do exactly as I bid you in everything, and you will finish your mother's work, and earn some big pennies. Do you like big pennies?"

"Yes."

"So you like big pennies, and you want to kill the Gars. I will take care of you.—Now, Marie!" Corentin said within himself after a pause, "you shall give him up to us yourself. She is too impetuous to think calmly over the blow that I mean to give her; and besides, passion never reflects. She does not know Montauran's handwriting; now is the time to set the snare into which her nature will make her rush blindfold. But Hulot is necessary to me if my scheme is to succeed. I will go and see him."

Meanwhile Mlle. de Verneuil and Francine were pondering devices for saving the Marquis from Corentin's dubious generosity and Hulot's bayonets.

"I will go and warn him!" the little Breton maid cried.

"Mad girl! do you know where he is? I myself, with all the instincts of my heart to guide me, might search a long while for him and never find him."

After devising a goodly number of the wild schemes that are so easily carried out by the fireside, Mlle. de Verneuil exclaimed, "When I see him, his peril will give me inspiration!"

Like all vehement natures, she delighted in leaving her course undecided till the last moment—trusting in her star, or in the ready wit and skill that seldom deserts a woman. Perhaps nothing had ever wrung her heart so violently before. Sometimes she seemed to remain in a kind of stupor, with her eyes set in a stare; sometimes the slightest sound shook her from head to foot, as some half-uprooted tree

quivers violently when the woodman's rope about it drags it hastily to its fall. There was a sudden loud report in the distance as a dozen guns were fired. Mlle. de Verneuil turned pale, caught Francine's hand, and said—"I am dying, Francine; they have killed him!"

They heard the heavy footstep of a soldier in the salon, and the terrified Francine rose to admit a corporal. The Republican made a military salute, and presented Mlle. de Verneuil with some letters written on soiled paper. As he received no acknowledgment from the young lady to whom he gave them, he said as he withdrew—"They are from the commandant, madame."

Mlle. de Verneuil, a prey to dark forebodings, read the letter, which Hulot had probably written in haste—"Mademoiselle," so it ran, "my Counter-Chouans have seized one of the Gars' messengers, who has just been shot. Among the letters thus intercepted is the one that I send, which may be of some use to you," etc.

"Heaven be thanked, it was not he whom they killed!" she cried, as she threw the letter into the fire. She breathed more freely, and eagerly read the note that had just been sent to her. It was from the Marquis, and appeared to be addressed to Mme. du Gua—"No, my angel, this evening I shall not be at the Vivetière, and this evening you will lose your wager with the Count, for I shall triumph over the Republic in the person of this delicious girl, who is certainly worth a night, as you must agree. This is the only real advantage that I have gained in the campaign, for La Vendée is submitting. There is nothing left for us to do in France, and we will, of course, return to England together. But serious business to-morrow!"

The note slipped from her fingers. She closed her eyes and lay back in absolute silence, with her head propped by a cushion. After a long pause she raised her eyes to the clock and read the hour; it was four in the afternoon.

"And my lord is keeping me waiting!" she said, with savage irony.

"Oh! perhaps he could not come!" said Francine.

"If he does not come," said Marie, in a smothered voice, "I will go myself to find him! But, no, he cannot be much longer now. Francine, am I very beautiful?"

"You are very pale!"

"Look round!" Mlle. du Verneuil went on; "might not the perfumed room, the flowers, and the lights, this intoxicating vapor and everything here, give an idea of a paradise to him whom to-night I will steep in the bliss of love?"

"What is the matter, mademoiselle?"

"I am betrayed, deceived, thwarted, cheated, duped, and ruined. I will kill him! I will tear him in pieces! Oh! yes, there was always something contemptuous in his manner that he scarcely concealed, but I would not see it! Oh! this will kill me! What a fool I am!" she laughed; "he is on his way, and to-night I will teach him that, whether wedded to me or no, the man who has possessed me can never forsake me afterward. My revenge shall be commensurate with his offence—he shall die in despair! I thought that there was something great in him; but he is the son of a lackey, there is no question of it. Truly, he has deceived me cleverly! Even now, I can scarcely believe that the man who was capable of giving me up to Pille-Miche without mercy could condescend to trickery not unworthy of Scapin. It is so easy to dupe a loving woman, that it is the lowest depth of baseness! He might kill me; well and good; but that he should lie to me, to me who had set him on high! To the scaffold with him! I wish I could see him guillotined! Am I so very cruel? He shall go to his death covered with kisses and caresses, which will have been worth twenty years of life to him."

"Marie," said Francine with angelic meekness, "be the victim of your lover, as so many another has been, but do not be his mistress or his executioner. In the depths of your heart you can keep his image, and it need not make you cruel to yourself. If there were no joy in love when hope is gone, what would become of us, poor women that

we are? The God of whom you never think, Marie, will reward us for having submitted to our lot upon earth—to our vocation of loving and suffering."

"Little puss," answered Mlle. de Verneuil, as she stroked Francine's hand, "your voice is very sweet and very winning. Reason, when she takes your form, has many charms. How I wish that I could obey you!"

"You will forgive him? You will not give him up?"

"Hush! do not speak of that man any more. Corentin is a noble creature compared with him. Do you understand me?"

She rose to her feet. Her wild thoughts and unquenchable thirst for vengeance were concealed beneath the dreadful quietness of her face. The very slowness of her measured footsteps seemed to betoken the fixed purpose in her mind in an indescribable way. Devouring this insult, tormented by her own thoughts, too proud to own to the least of her pangs, she went to the guardhouse in St. Leonard's Gate, to ask to be directed to the commandant's lodging. She had scarcely left the house when Corentin entered it.

"Oh, M. Corentin," cried Francine, "if you are interested in that young man, save him! Mademoiselle will give him up. This wretched paper has ruined everything."

Corentin took up the letter carelessly. "Where is she gone?" he inquired.

"I do not know."

"I will hurry after her," he said, "to save her from her own despair."

He vanished, taking the letter with him, hurried out of the house with all speed, and spoke to the little boy who was playing about before the door.

"Which way did the lady go when she went out just now?"

Galope-Chopine's son went several paces with Corentin, and pointed out the steep road which led to St. Leonard's Gate.

"That way," he said, without hesitating, faithful to

the instinct of vengeance that his mother had inspired in him.

While he was speaking four men in disguise entered Mlle. de Verneuil's house; but neither Corentin nor the little boy saw them.

"Go back to your post," the spy said. "Look as though you were amusing yourself by turning the latches on the shutters, but keep a sharp lookout in every direction, even upon the roofs."

Corentin sped in the direction pointed out by the child. He thought that he recognized Mlle. de Verneuil in the fog, and, as a matter of fact, he came up with her just as she reached St. Leonard's Gate.

"Where are you going?" said he, offering his arm to her. "You look pale; what can have happened? Is it fitting for you to go out alone in this way? Take my arm."

"Where is the commandant?" she asked him.

Mlle. de Verneuil had scarcely finished the sentence when she heard a reconnoitring party moving outside St. Leonard's Gate, and soon distinguished Hulot's deep bass voice among the other confused sounds.

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!*" he exclaimed. "I have never seen it thicker than it is just now when we are making the rounds. The *ci-devant* seems to have the control of the weather."

"What are you grumbling at?" said Mlle. de Verneuil, as she grasped his arm tightly; "the fog can hide vengeance as well as perfidy. Commandant," she went on in a low voice, "it is a question now of taking such measures in concert with me that the Gars shall not escape us this time."

"Is he in your house?" he asked, and there was a troubled sound in his voice that showed his astonishment.

"No," she replied; "but give me a man that can be depended upon, and I will send him to you, to warn you of the Marquis's arrival."

"What are you doing?" Corentin asked with eager haste.

"A soldier in your house will scare him, but a child (I will find one) will not awaken suspicion—"

"Commandant," Mlle. de Verneuil resumed, "you can surround my house at once, thanks to this fog that you execrate. Post soldiers about it in every direction. Place a picket in St. Leonard's Church so as to secure the esplanade, which is overlooked by my windows. Post men on the Promenade itself; for though my window is twenty feet from the ground, despair sometimes gives strength sufficient to overleap the most perilous distances. Listen! I shall probably send this gentleman away through the house door; so you must give the task of watching it to none but a brave man; for no one can deny *his* courage," she said, heaving a sigh, "and he will fight for his life."

"Gudin!" cried the commandant.

The young Fougerais sprang forward. He had been standing in the midst of the knot of men who had returned with Hulot, and who had remained drawn up in rank at a little distance.

"Listen, my boy," the old soldier said in low tones, "this confounded girl is betraying the Gars to us. I do not know why, but no matter, that is not our business. Take ten men with you and post them so as to guard the blind-alley and the girl's house at the end of it; but you must manage so that neither you nor your men are seen."

"Yes, commandant, I know the ground."

"Well, my boy," Hulot went on, "I will send Beau-Pied to you to let you know when the moment comes to be up and doing. Try to tackle the Marquis yourself; and if you can kill him, so that I shall not have to try him first and shoot him afterward, you shall be a lieutenant in a fortnight, or my name is not Hulot. Here, mademoiselle," he said, as he pointed to Gudin; "here is a brave fellow who will flinch from nothing. He will keep a sharp lookout before your house, and whether the *ci-devant* comes out or tries to go in, he will not miss him."

Gudin set out with his ten soldiers.

"Do you clearly understand what you are about?" Corentin murmured to Mlle. de Verneuil.

She made him no answer. With a kind of satisfaction she watched the men start, under the orders of the sub-lieutenant, to post themselves on the Promenade, and yet others, who, in obedience to Hulot's directions, took up their position along the dark walls of St. Leonard's Church.

"There are houses adjoining mine," she said to the commandant; "surround them also. Let us not lay up matter for repentance by neglecting a single precaution that we ought to take."

"She is mad," thought Hulot.

"Am I not a prophet?" Corentin said in his ear. "The child I shall send to the house is the little gars with the bloody foot, so that—"

He did not finish. Mlle. de Verneuil had suddenly darted away toward her house, whither he followed her, whistling like a happy man. When he came up with her she had already reached her doorstep, where Corentin once more found Galope-Chopine's son.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "take this little fellow with you; you could not have a more guileless and active messenger."

Then he breathed (so to speak) the following words into the little lad's ear: "When you have once seen the Gars within the house, no matter what they say to you, run away, come and find me at the guardhouse, and I will give you enough to find you in bread for the rest of your life."

Corentin felt his hand squeezed hard by the young Breton, who followed Mlle. de Verneuil.

"Now, my good friends, come to an explanation whenever you like," cried Corentin, when the door was shut. "If you make love, my lord Marquis, it will be over your own shroud!"

Yet Corentin could not bring himself to go out of sight of that fatal house, and betook himself to the Promenade, where he found the commandant busily giving orders. Night

soon came on. Two hours passed by, and still the different sentries distributed at their posts had seen nothing that could lead them to suspect that the Marquis had come through the triple line of men, who were watching from their hiding-places along the three sides of the Papegaut's Tower by which access was possible. Corentin had walked from the Promenade to the guardhouse a score of times, and each time his expectations had been disappointed, and his young messenger had not yet come to find him. Plunged in deep thought, the spy strolled slowly along the Promenade, undergoing the martyrdom to which three terrible conflicting passions subjected him—a victim to love, ambition, and greed of gold.

It struck eight on all the clocks. The moon rose late, so that the scene on which this drama of his own devising was about to come to a crisis was wrapped in appalling gloom by the darkness and the thick fog. The agent of police managed to suppress his passions; he locked his arms over his breast, and never took his eyes off the window that stood out above the tower like a gleaming phantom shape. Whenever his steps led him to the side of the Promenade nearest the valleys, along the brink of the precipices, he mechanically scrutinized the fog, with the long pale streaks of light flung across it here and there, from some window among the houses in the town or suburbs, above or below the fortifications. The deep silence that prevailed was only troubled by the murmur of the Nançon, by melancholy sounds at intervals from the belfry, or by the footsteps of the sentinels and the clank of weapons, when they came to relieve guard hour by hour. Everything, men and nature alike, had grown solemn.

"It is as dark as a wolf's throat," Pille-Miche remarked just then.

"Go along," replied Marche-a-Terre, "and keep as quiet as a dead dog."

"I scarcely dare draw my breath," the Chouan retorted.

"If the man who let a stone roll down just now wants my

knife to find a sheath in his heart, he has only to do it again," said Marche-a-Terre, in so low a voice that it mingled confusedly with the murmur of the Nançon.

"Why, it was I," said Pille-Miche.

"Well, old money-bag, creep along on your belly like a snake, or we shall leave our carcasses here before there is any occasion for it."

"Hi! Marche-a-Terre," the incorrigible Pille-Miche began again. He had laid himself flat on the ground, and was using both hands to hoist himself on to the path where his comrade was, and now he spoke in the ear of the latter in so low a voice that the Chouans following behind him did not catch a syllable that he said. "Hi! Marche-a-Terre, if we are to believe our Grande-Garce, there is a glorious lot of plunder up there. Will you go halves?"

"Listen, Pille-Miche!" said Marche-a-Terre, as, still flat on his stomach, he came to a stop, a movement imitated by the whole troop of Chouans, so exhausted were they by the difficulties of their progress up the steep sides of the precipice.

"I know you for one of those honest grab-alls, who are as fond of giving hard knocks as of taking them, when there is no other choice. We have not come here after dead men's shoes; it is devil against devil, and woe to them that have the shorter claws! The Grande-Garce sent us here to rescue the Gars. That is where he is, look! Lift up your dog's head and look at that window, up above the tower!" It was on the stroke of midnight as he spoke. The moon rose, and the fog began to look like pale smoke. Pille-Miche gripped Marche-a-Terre's arm violently, and pointed out, without making a sound, the gleaming triangular blades of several bayonets, some ten feet above them.

"The Blues are there already," said Pille-Miche; "we have not a chance against them."

"Patience!" replied Marche-a-Terre; "if I looked into it thoroughly this morning, there should be, somewhere about the base of the Papegaut's Tower and between the

ramparts and the Promenade, a space where they are always heaping manure; one can drop down on to it as if it were a bed."

"If St. Labre would turn all the blood that will be shed into good cider, the Fougères people would find a very ample supply of it to-morrow," remarked Pille-Miche.

Marche-a-Terre laid his great hand over his friend's mouth; then the muttered caution that he gave passed from line to line till it reached the last Chouan, who clung aloft to the heather on the schistous rock. As a matter of fact, Corentin was standing on the edge of the esplanade, and his ears were too accustomed to vigilance not to detect the rustling noises made by the shrubs as the Chouans pulled and twisted them, and the faint sound of the pebbles that fell to the foot of the precipice below. Marche-a-Terre apparently possessed the gift of seeing through the darkness, or his senses had become as acute as those of a savage by being constantly called into play. He had caught sight of Corentin, or perhaps he had scented him like a well-trained dog. The diplomatist spy listened intently to the silence, and scanned the natural wall of the schist, but he could discover nothing there. If the hazy dubious light allowed him to see a few of the Chouans at all, he took them for fragments of the rock, so thoroughly did the living bodies preserve the appearance of inanimate nature. The danger to the troop did not last long. Corentin's attention was called away by a very distinct and audible sound which came from the other end of the Promenade at a spot where the buttress-wall came to an end and the sheer face of the rock began. A pathway that ran along the edge of the schist and communicated with the Queen's Staircase also ended at this point, just where the rock and the masonry met. As Corentin reached the spot, a form rose up as if by magic before his eyes; and when, feeling doubtful as to its intentions, he stretched out a hand to lay hold of the being (phantom or otherwise), he grasped the soft and rounded outlines of a woman.

"The devil take it, good woman," he muttered in a low tone; "if you had happened on any one else, you might have come in for a bullet through your head. Where do you come from, and where are you going at this time of night? Are you dumb?"

"It really is a woman, at any rate," said he to himself.

Silence was growing dangerous, so the stranger replied in tones that showed her great alarm—"Oh! I am coming back from an up-sitting, master."

"It is the Marquis's make-believe mother," said Corentin to himself. "Let us see what she will do."

"All right; go along that way, old woman," he went on aloud, pretending not to recognize her. "Go to the left if you don't want to be shot."

He stood motionless, till, seeing that Mme. du Gua turned in the direction of the Papegaut's Tower, he followed her at a distance with diabolical cunning. While this fateful meeting was taking place, the Chouans had very cleverly taken up their position on the manure-heap to which Marche-a-Terre had guided them.

"There is the Grande-Garce!" muttered Marche-a-Terre to himself, while he shuffled along the side of the tower as a bear might have done.

"Here we are!" he said to the lady.

"Good!" Mme. du Gua replied. "If you can find a ladder about the house or in the garden that comes to an end about six feet below the manure-heap, the Gars will be saved. Do you see the round window up there? It is in a dressing-room that opens out of the bedroom; and you must reach it. This side of the tower, at the foot of which you are standing, is the one side that is not surrounded. The horses are ready; and if you have guarded the ford of the Nançon, we ought to have him out of danger in fifteen minutes, in spite of his folly. But if that wench tries to follow him, stab her."

Corentin now perceived through the gloom that a few of the vague shapes which he had at first taken for rocks were moving stealthily; he went at once to the guard at St. Leon-

ard's Gate, where he found the commandant fully dressed, but sleeping on a camp-bed.

"Let him alone!" Beau-Pied said roughly to Corentin; "he has only just lain down there."

"The Chouans are here!" cried Corentin in Hulot's ears.

"Impossible! but so much the better," said the commandant, heavy with sleep though he was; "there will be fighting at any rate!"

When Hulot came to the Promenade, Corentin pointed out to him, through the darkness, the strange position occupied by the Chouans.

"They have either outwitted or gagged the sentries that I posted between the Queen's Staircase and the castle!" exclaimed the commandant. "By Jove! what a fog it is! But patience! I will send fifty men and a lieutenant round to the base of the cliff. We must not set upon them from above, for the brutes are so tough that they will let themselves drop to the bottom of the precipice like stones, and never break a limb."

The cracked bell in the church-tower struck two as the commandant came back to the Promenade, after taking the most stringent measures a soldier could devise for surprising and seizing Marche-a-Terre and the Chouans under his command. Every guard had been doubled, so that by this time Mlle. de Verneuil's house had become the central point about which a small army was gathered. The commandant found Corentin absorbed in contemplation of the window that looked out over the Papegaut's Tower.

"Citizen," said Hulot, addressing him, "it is my belief that the *ci-devant* is making fools of us all, for nothing has stirred so far."

"There he is!" cried Corentin, pointing to the window. "I saw a man's shadow on the curtains. But I do not understand what has become of my little boy. They have killed him or gained him over. Look there, commandant; do you see? It *is* a man. Let us go."

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!* I am not going to arrest him in bed.

If he is in there, he is sure to come out; Gudin will not miss him," replied Hulot, who had his own reasons for delay.

"Come, now, commandant; in the name of the law, I command you to advance instantly upon the house."

"You are a pretty fellow, at all events, to think to order me about."

The commandant's wrath did not trouble Corentin.

"You will obey me," he said coolly; "for here is an order drawn up in due form, and signed by the Minister of War, which will compel you to do so." He drew a paper from his pocket. "Do you really think that we are fools enough to let that girl act according to her own notions? We are stamping out civil war, and the greatness of the end in view justifies the littleness of the means employed."

"I take the liberty, citizen, of sending you to——. You understand? That is enough, then. Put your best foot foremost, and let me alone; and do it in less than no time."

"Read this first!" said Corentin.

"Don't plague me about your business," cried Hulot, furious at receiving orders from a creature in his opinion so despicable.

Galope-Chopine's son started up between the two at that moment like a rat out of a hole in the ground.

"The Gars is going!" he cried.

"Which way?"

"Along the Rue St. Leonard."

"Beau-Pied," Hulot whispered to the corporal, who was standing beside him, "run and tell your lieutenant to approach the house, and to keep up some nice little file-firing upon it; do you understand? File to the left, and march toward the tower," he shouted to the rest of the men.

It is necessary, if the close of the drama is to be clearly understood, to return and to enter Mlle. de Verneuil's house with her. When the passions are excited to the highest pitch, the intoxication that they produce is far more complete than anything effected by those paltry stimulants—

wine and opium. The clearness of ideas to which we attain at such times, the subtle keenness of our over-excited senses, bring about the strangest and most unexpected results. Beneath the arbitrary sway of one sole thought, certain temperaments can clearly perceive the least perceptible things, while the most obvious matters are for them as though they had no existence. Mlle. de Verneuil had fallen a victim to the kind of intoxication which makes our actual existence seem to be like the life of a somnambulist. When she had read Montauran's letter, she had ordered all things in such a way that he could not escape her vengeance, just as eagerly as she had but lately made every preparation for the first festival of her love. But when she saw her house carefully surrounded, by her own orders, with a triple line of bayonets, a sudden gleam of light shone through her soul. She sat in judgment upon her conduct, and thought with a kind of revulsion that she had just perpetrated a crime. Her first uneasy impulse led her to spring to the threshold of her door, and to stay there motionless for a brief space, trying to reflect, but utterly unable to follow out a train of thought. She was so little aware of what she had just done that she wondered why she was standing in the vestibule of her own house holding a strange child by the hand. Myriads of sparks like little tongues of flame swam in the air before her. She took a step or two to shake off the dreadful numbness that had crept over her senses, but nothing appeared to her in its true shape or with its real colors; she was like one that slept. She seized the little boy's hand with a roughness that was not usual to her, and drew him along so hurriedly that she seemed to possess the activity of a mad woman. She saw nothing whatever in the salon when she crossed it, though three men greeted her, and stood apart to allow her to pass.

"Here she is!" said one of them.

"She is very beautiful!" the priest exclaimed.

"Yes," replied the first speaker, "but how pale and troubled she is—"

"And how absent-minded!" said the third; "she does not see us."

At the door of her own room Mlle. de Verneuil saw Francine, who whispered to her with a sweet and happy face, "He is there, Marie!"

Mlle. de Verneuil seemed to awake, and to be able to think; she looked down at the child whose hand she held, recognized him, and said to Francine—"Shut this little boy up somewhere, and if you wish me to live, be very careful not to let him escape."

While she slowly uttered the words, she turned her eyes on the door of her room, on which they rested with such appalling fixity that it might have been thought that she saw her victim through the thickness of the panels. She softly pushed the door open, and closed it without turning herself, for she saw the Marquis standing before the hearth. He was handsomely but not too elaborately dressed; and there was an air of festival about the young noble's attire that added to the radiance with which lovers are invested in women's eyes. At the sight of him, all Mlle. de Verneuil's presence of mind returned to her. The white enamel of her teeth showed between the tightly-strained lines of her half-opened lips, which described a set smile that expressed dread rather than delight. With slow steps she went toward the young noble, and pointing to the clock, she spoke with hollow mirth, "A man who is worthy of love is well worth the anxiety with which he is expected."

But the violence of her feelings overcame her; she fell back upon the sofa that stood near the fire.

"Dear Marie, you are very charming when you are angry!" said the Marquis, seating himself beside her, taking her passive hand, and entreating a glance which she would not give. "I hope," he went on, in a tender and soothing voice, "that in another moment Marie will be very vexed with herself for having hidden her face from her fortunate husband." She turned sharply as the words fell on her ear, and gazed into his eyes.

"What does that terrible look mean?" he went on, smiling. "But your hand is as hot as fire! My love, what is it?"

"My love!" she echoed, in a stifled, unnatural voice.

"Yes," he said, falling on his knees before her, and taking both her hands, which he covered with kisses; "yes, my love, I am yours for life."

Impetuously she pushed him from her, and rose to her feet. Her features were distorted; she laughed like a maniac as she said—"You do not mean one word of it; you are baser than the vilest criminal!"

She sprang quickly toward the dagger which lay beside a vase, and flashed it within a few inches of the astonished young man's breast.

"Bah!" she said, flinging down the weapon, "I have not enough esteem for you to kill you! Your blood is too vile even for the soldiers to shed. I see nothing but the executioner before you."

The words came from her with difficulty, and were uttered in a low voice; she stamped her foot like a spoiled child in a passion. The Marquis went up to her and tried to clasp her in his arms.

"Do not touch me!" she cried, drawing back in horror.

"She is mad!" said the Marquis, speaking aloud in his despair.

"Yes, I am mad," she repeated, "but not yet so mad as to be a toy for you. What would I not forgive to passionate love! But that you should think to possess me without any love for me! That you should write and say so to that—"

"To whom have I written?" he asked in amazement that was clearly unfeigned.

"To that virtuous woman who wished to kill me!"

The Marquis turned pale at this, and grasped the back of the armchair by which he was standing so tightly that he broke it, as he cried—"If Mme. du Gua has been guilty of any foul play—"

Mlle. de Verneuil looked round for the letter and could

not find it again—she called Francine, and the Breton maid came.

"Where is the letter?"

"M. Corentin took it away with him."

"Corentin! Ah! I understand everything now. That letter was his doing. He has deceived me, as he can deceive, with diabolical ingenuity."

She went to the sofa and sank down upon it, with a piercing wail, and a flood of tears fell from her eyes. Doubt and certainty were equally horrible. The Marquis flung himself at his mistress's feet, and clasped her to his breast, saying over and over again for her the only words that he could pronounce—"Why do you weep, dear angel? What is the trouble? Your scornful words are full of love. Do not weep! I love you; I love you forever!"

Suddenly he felt that she clasped him to her with superhuman strength, and in the midst of her sobs she said, "You love me still?"

"Can you doubt it?" he answered, and his tone was almost sad.

She withdrew herself suddenly from his arms, and sprang back two paces, as if in confusion and dread.

"If I doubt it?" she cried.

She saw the Marquis smiling at her with such gentle irony that the words died away on her lips. She let him take her hand and lead her as far as the threshold. Marie saw, at the end of the salon, an altar that had been hastily erected during her absence. The priest, who had resumed his ecclesiastical garb, was there; and the light upon the ceiling from the shining altar candles was sweet as hope. She recognized the two men who had before saluted her; they were the Comte de Bauvan and the Baron du Guénic, the two witnesses whom Montauran had chosen.

"Will you still refuse?" the Marquis asked her in a low voice. But when she saw the scene before her, she shrank back a step so as to reach her own room again, and fell upon her knees before the Marquis, and

raised her hands to him, and cried—"Oh, forgive me! forgive! forgive—"

Her voice died in her throat, her head fell back, her eyes were closed, and she lay as if dead in the arms of the Marquis and of Francine. When she opened her eyes again she met the gaze of the young chief—a look full of kindness and of love.

"Patience, Marie! This is the last storm!" he said.

"Yes, the last!" she echoed.

Francine and the Marquis looked at each other in surprise, but she enjoined silence on them both by a gesture.

"Ask the priest to come," she said, "and leave me alone with him." They withdrew.

"Father," she said to the priest, who suddenly appeared before her, "when I was a child, an old man with white hair like you often used to tell me that if it is asked with a living faith, one can obtain anything of God: is that true?"

"It is true," the priest answered; "all things are possible to Him who has created all things."

Mlle. de Verneuil threw herself on her knees with incredible fervor.

"O God!" she cried in her ecstasy, "my faith in Thee is as great as my love for him! Inspire me! Work a miracle here, or take my life!"

"Your prayer will be heard," said the priest.

Mlle. de Verneuil came out to meet the eyes of those assembled, leaning upon the arm of the old white-haired priest. It was a profound emotion hidden in the depths of her heart that gave her to her lover's love; she was more beautiful now than on any bygone day, for such a serenity as painters love to give to martyrs' faces had set its seal upon her, and lent grandeur to her face.

She gave her hand to the Marquis, and together they went toward the altar, where they knelt. This marriage, which was about to be solemnized two paces from the nuptial couch; the hastily erected altar, the crucifix, the vases, the chalice brought secretly by the priest, the fumes of in-

cense floating beneath the cornices, which hitherto had only seen the steam of every-day meals, the priest, who had simply slipped a stole over his cassock, the altar candles in a dwelling-room—all united to make a strange and touching scene which completes the picture of those days of sorrowful memory, when civil discord had overthrown the most sacred institutions. In those times religious ceremonies had all the charm of mysteries. Children were privately baptized in the rooms where their mothers still groaned. As of old, the Lord went in simplicity and poverty to console the dying. Young girls received the sacred wafer for the first time on the spot where they had been playing only the night before. The marriage of the Marquis and Mlle. de Verneuil was about to be solemnized, like so many other marriages, with an act forbidden by the new Legislation; but all these marriages, celebrated for the most part beneath the oak trees, were afterward scrupulously sanctioned by law. The priest who thus preserved the ancient usages to the last was one of those men who are faithful to their principles in the height of the storm. His voice, guiltless of the oath required by the Republic, only breathed words of peace through the tempest. He did not stir up the fires of insurrection, as the Abbé Gudin had been wont to do; but he had devoted himself, like many others, to the dangerous task of fulfilling the duties of the priest toward such souls as remained faithful to the Catholic Church. In order to carry out his perilous mission successfully, he made use of all the pious artifices to which persecution compelled him to resort; so that the Marquis had only succeeded in finding him in one of those underground hiding-places which bear the name of "The Priest's Hole," even in our own day. The sight of his pale worn face inspired such devout feelings and respect in others that it transformed the worldly aspect of the salon and made it seem like a holy place. Everything was in readiness for the act that should bring misfortune and joy. In the deep silence before the ceremony began the priest asked for the name of the bride.

"Marie-Nathalie, daughter of Mlle. Blanche de Castéran, late Abbess of Notre-Dame de Séez, and of Victor-Amédée, Duc de Verneuil."

"Born?"

"At la Chasterie, near Alençon."

"I should not have thought that Montauran would have been fool enough to marry her," the baron whispered to the count. "The natural daughter of a duke! Out upon it!"

"If she had been a king's daughter, he might have been excused," the Comte de Bauvan said, with a smile, "but I am not the one to blame him. I have a liking for the other, and I mean to lay siege to Charette's Filly now. There is not much coo about *her!*"

Montauran's designations had been previously filled in, the lovers set their names to the document, and the names of the witnesses followed. The ceremony began, and all the while no one but Marie heard the sound of arms and the heavy even tread of the soldiers coming to relieve the Blues, who were, doubtless, on guard before St. Leonard's Church, where she herself had posted them. She shuddered and raised her eyes to the crucifix upon the altar.

"She is a saint!" murmured Francine.

"Give me saints of that sort, and I will turn deucedly devout," the Count said to himself, in a low voice.

When the priest put the usual question to Mlle. de Verneuil, her answering "Yes" came with a heavy sigh. She leaned over, and said in her husband's ear, "In a little while you will know why I break the vow that I made never to marry you."

The rite was over, and those who had been present passed out into the room where dinner had been served, when, just as the guests were sitting down, Jeremiah came in in a state of great terror. The unhappy bride rose at once and went up to him, followed by Francine. Then making one of the excuses that women can devise so readily, she begged the Marquis to do the honors of the feast by himself for a few moments; and hurried the servant away

before he could commit any blunder that might prove fatal.

"Oh! Francine," she said, "what a thing it is to feel one's self at the brink of death, and to be unable to say, 'I am dying!' "

Mlle. de Verneuil did not return. An excuse for her absence could be found in the ceremony that had just been concluded. When the meal came to an end, and the Marquis's anxiety had risen to its height, Marie came back in all the splendor of her bridal array. She looked calm and happy; while Francine, who had returned with her, bore traces of such profound terror on all her features that those assembled seemed to see in the faces of the two women some such strange picture as the eccentric brush of Salvator Rosa might have painted, representing Death and Life holding each other by the hand.

"Gentlemen," she said, addressing the priest, the Baron, and the Count, "you must be my guests to-night. Any attempt to leave Fougères would be too hazardous. I have given orders to this good girl here to conduct each of you to his own room. No resistance, I beg," she said, as the priest was about to speak; "I hope that you will not refuse to obey a bride on her wedding day."

An hour later she was alone with her lover in the bridal chamber that she had made so fair. They stood at last beside the fatal couch where so many hopes are blighted as by the tomb, where the chances of an awakening to a happy life are so uncertain, where love dies or comes into being according to the power of the character that is only finally tested there. Marie looked at the clock, and said to herself, "Six hours to live!"

"So I have been able to sleep!" she exclaimed when, as morning drew near, she woke with the shock of the sudden start that disturbs us when we have agreed with ourselves on the previous evening to wake at a certain hour. "Yes, I have slept," she repeated, as she saw by the candle-light that the hand on the dial of the clock pointed to the hour of

two. She turned and gazed at the Marquis, who was sleeping with one hand beneath his head, as children do, while the other hand grasped that of his wife. He was half smiling, as though he had fallen asleep in the midst of a kiss. "Ah!" she murmured to herself, "he is slumbering like a child! But how could he feel mistrust of me, of me who owe him unspeakable happiness?"

She touched him gently, he awoke and smiled in earnest. He kissed the hand that he held, and gazed at the unhappy woman before him with such glowing eyes that she could not endure the passionate light in them, and slowly drooped her heavy eyelids as if to shut out a spectacle fraught with peril for her. But while she thus veiled the growing warmth of her own eyes, she so provoked the desire to which she appeared to refuse herself, that if she had not had a profound dread to conceal, her husband might have reproached her with too much coquetry. They both raised their charming heads at the same moment, with a sign full of gratitude for the pleasures that they had experienced. But after a moment's survey of the exquisite picture presented by his wife's face, the Marquis, thinking that Marie's brow was overshadowed by some feeling of melancholy, said to her softly—"Why that shade of sadness, love?"

"Poor Alphonse, whither do you think I have brought you?" she asked, trembling.

"To happiness."

"Nay, to death."

Quivering with horror, she sprang out of bed, followed by the astonished Marquis. His wife led him to the window. A frenzied gesture escaped Marie as she drew back the curtains and pointed to a score of soldiers in the square. The fog had dispersed, and the white moonlight fell on their uniforms and muskets, on the imperturbable Corentin, who came and went like a jackal on the lookout for his prey, and on the commandant, who stood there motionless with folded arms, with his head thrown back, and his mouth pursed up, in an alert and uneasy attitude.

"Let them be, Marie, and come back."

"Why do you laugh, Alphonse? It was *I* who posted them there!"

"You are dreaming."

"Nay."

For a moment they looked at each other, and the Marquis understood it all. He clasped her in his arms. "What of that," he said; "I love you forever."

"All is not lost, even now!" cried Marie. "Alphonse!" she said, after a pause, "there is yet hope!"

Just then they distinctly heard the stifled cry of a screech-owl, and Francine suddenly entered from the dressing-room.

"Pierre is there!" she cried, in almost frenzied joy.

The Marquise and Francine dressed Montauran in a Chouan's costume with the marvellous quickness that women alone possess. When Marie saw that her husband was busy loading the firearms that Francine had brought for him, she quickly slipped away, making a sign to her faithful Breton maid. Francine led the Marquis into the adjoining dressing-room. At the sight of a number of sheets securely knotted together, the young chief could appreciate the alert activity with which the Breton girl had done her work, as she sought to disappoint the watchfulness of the soldiers.

"I can never get through," the Marquis said, as he made a survey of the narrow embrasure of the round window. But the circular opening was just then blocked up by a great dark countenance; and the hoarse voice, that Francine knew so well, cried softly—"Quick, General! Those toads of Blues are on the move!"

"Oh! one more kiss," said a sweet and trembling voice.

Montauran's feet were set on the ladder by which he was to escape, but he had not yet extricated himself from the window, and felt himself clasped in a desperate embrace. He uttered a cry, for he saw that his wife had dressed herself in his clothes, and tried to hold her fast, but she tore herself hastily from his arms, and he was obliged to descend the ladder. In his hand he kept a scrap of some woven ma-

terial, and a sudden gleam of moonlight showed him that it must be a strip of the waistcoat that he had worn on the previous evening.

"Halt! Fire by platoons!"

Hulot's words spoken broke the deep stillness that had something hideous about it, and snapped the charm that seemed hitherto to have prevailed over the place and the men in it. The sound of a salvo of balls at the base of the tower in the valley bottom followed hard upon the firing of the Blues upon the Promenade. Volley succeeded volley without interruption; the Republicans kept up their fire, mercilessly; but no sound was uttered by the victims—there was a horrible silence between each discharge.

Corentin, however, suspected some trap, for he had heard one of the men, whom he had pointed out to the commandant, drop from his lofty position at the top of the ladder.

"Not one of those animals makes a sound," he remarked to Hulot. "Our pair of lovers are quite capable of keeping us amused by some sort of trick, while they themselves are perhaps escaping in another direction."

The spy, in his eagerness to obtain light on this mystery, sent Galope-Chopine's child to find some torches. Hulot had caught the drift of Corentin's suspicions so aptly that the old soldier, who was preoccupied with the sounds of an obstinate encounter that was taking place before the guard-house in St. Leonard's Gate, exclaimed, "True, there cannot be two of them," and rushed off in that direction.

"We have given him a leaden shower-bath, commandant," so Beau-Pied greeted his commandant, "but he has killed Gudin, and wounded two more men. Ah! the madman. He had broken through three lines of our fellows, and would have got away into the open country, if it had not been for the sentry at St. Leonard's Gate, who spitted him on his bayonet."

The commandant hurried into the guardhouse on hearing this piece of news, and saw a blood-stained body stretched

out upon the camp-bed where it had just been laid. He went up to the man whom he believed to be the Marquis, raised the hat that covered his face, and dropped into a chair.

"I thought so," he cried vehemently, as he folded his arms. "*Sacré tonnerre!* she had kept him too long."

The soldiers stood about, motionless. The commandant's movement had uncoiled a woman's long dark hair.

The silence was suddenly broken by the sounds of a crowd of armed men. Corentin came into the guardhouse, followed by four men, who had made a kind of stretcher of their muskets, upon which they were carrying Montauran, whose legs and arms had been broken by many gunshots. They laid the Marquis on the camp-bed beside his wife. He saw her, and found strength sufficient to take her hand in a convulsive clasp. The dying girl turned her head painfully, recognized her husband, and a sudden spasm shook her that was terrible to see, as she murmured in a nearly inaudible voice—"A day without a morrow! . . . God has heard me indeed!"

"Commandant," said the Marquis, summoning all his strength to speak, while he still held Marie's hand in his, "I depend upon your loyalty to send word of my death to my young brother in London. Write to him, and tell him that if he would fain obey my last wishes, he will not bear arms against France; but he will never forsake the service of the King."

"It shall be done," said Hulot, pressing the hand of the dying man.

"Take them to the hospital near by," cried Corentin.

Hulot grasped the spy by the arm in such a sort that he left the marks of his nails in the flesh as he said to him—"Since your task here is ended, be off! And take a good look at the face of Commandant Hulot, so that you may never cross his path again, unless you have a mind to have his cutlass through your body."

The old soldier drew his sabre as he spoke.

"There is another of your honest folk who will never

make their fortunes," said Corentin to himself, when he was well away from the guardhouse.

The Marquis was still able to thank his enemy by a movement of the head, expressing a soldier's esteem for a generous foe.

In 1827 an old man, accompanied by his wife, was bargaining for cattle in the market of Fougères. Nobody took any special heed of him, though in his time he had killed more than a hundred men. No one even reminded him of his nickname of Marche-a-Terre. The person to whom valuable information concerning the actors in this drama is owing saw the man as he led a cow away; there was that look of homely simplicity about him which prompts the remark, "That is a very honest fellow!"

As for Cibot, otherwise called Pille-Miche, his end has been witnessed already. Perhaps Marche-a-Terre made a vain attempt to rescue his comrade from the scaffold, and was present in the market-place of Alençon at the terrific riot that occurred during the famous trials of Rifoel, Bryond, and La Chanterie.

THE COUNTRY DOCTOR

PREFACE

In hardly any of his books, with the possible exception of "Eugénie Grandet," does Balzac seem to have taken a greater interest than in "Le Médecin de Campagne"; and the fact of this interest, together with the merit and intensity of the book in each case, is, let it be repeated, a valid argument against those who would have it that there was something essentially sinister both in his genius and in his character.

The "Médecin de Campagne" was an early book; it was published in 1833, a date of which there is an interesting mark in the selection of the name "Evelina," the name of Madame Hanska, whom Balzac had just met, for the lost Jansenist love of Benassis; and it had been on the stocks for a considerable time. It is also noteworthy, as lying almost entirely ouside the general scheme of the "Comédie Humaine" as far as personages go. Its chief characters in the remarkable, if not absolutely impeccable, *repertoire* of MM. Cerfberr and Christophe (they have, a rare thing with them, missed Agathe the forsaken mistress) have no references appended to their articles, except to the book itself; and I cannot remember that any of the more generally pervading *dramatis personæ* of the Comedy makes even an incidental appearance here. The book is as isolated as its scene and subject—I might have added, as its own beauty, which is singular and unique, nor wholly easy to give a critical account of. The transformation of the *cretin*-haunted desert into a happy valley is in itself a commonplace of the preceding century; it may be found several times over in Marmontel's "Contes Moraux," as well as in other places. The

extreme minuteness of detail, effective as it is in the picture of the house and elsewhere, becomes a little tedious even for well-tried and well-affected readers, in reference to the exact number of cartwrights and harness-makers, and so forth; while the modern reader pure and simple, though schooled to endure detail, is schooled to endure it only of the ugly. The minor characters and episodes, with the exception of the wonderful story or legend of Napoleon by Private Goguelat, and the private himself, are neither of the first interest, nor always carefully worked out: La Fosseuse, for instance, is a very tantalizingly unfinished study, of which it is nearly certain that Balzac must at some time or other have meant to make much more than he has made; Genestas, excellent as far as he goes, is not much more than a type; and there is nobody else in the foreground at all except the Doctor himself.

It is, however, beyond all doubt in the very subordination of these other characters to Benassis, and in the skilful grouping of the whole as background and adjunct to him, that the appeal of the book as art consists. From that point of view there are grounds for regarding it as the finest of the author's work in the simple style, the least indebted to superadded ornament or to mere variety. The dangerous expedient of a *recit*, of which the eighteenth-century novelists were so fond, has never been employed with more successful effect than in the confession of Benassis, at once the climax and the centre of the story. And one thing which strikes us immediately about this confession is the universality of its humanity and its strange freedom from merely national limitations. To very few French novelists—to few even of those who are generally credited with a much softer mold and a much purer morality than Balzac is popularly supposed to have been able to boast—would inconstancy to a mistress have seemed a fault which could be reasonably punished, which could be even reasonably represented as having been punished in fact, by the refusal of an honest girl's love in the first place. Nor would many have conceived as pos-

sible, or have been able to represent in lifelike colors, the lifelong penance which Benassis imposes on himself. The tragic end, indeed, is more in their general way, but they would seldom have known how to lead up to it.

In almost all ways Balzac has saved himself from the dangers incident to his plan in this book after a rather miraculous fashion. The Goguelat myth may seem disconnected, and he did as a matter of fact once publish it separately; yet it sets off (in the same sort of felicitous manner of which Shakespeare's clown-scenes and others are the capital examples in literature) both the slightly matter-of-fact details of the beatification of the valley and the various minute sketches of places and folk, and the almost superhuman goodness of Benassis, and his intensely and piteously human suffering and remorse. It is like the red cloak in a group; it lights, warms, inspirits the whole picture.

And perhaps the most remarkable thing of all is the way in which Balzac in this story, so full of goodness of feeling, of true religion (for if Benassis is not an ostensible practicer of religious rites, he avows his orthodoxy in theory, and more than justifies it in practice), has almost entirely escaped the sentimentality *plus* unorthodoxy of similar work in the eighteenth century, and the sentimentality *plus* orthodoxy of similar work in the nineteenth. Benassis no doubt plays Providence in a manner and with a success which it is rarely given to mortal man to achieve; but we do not feel either the approach to sham, or the more than approach to gush, with which similar handling on the part of Dickens too often affects some of us. The sin and the punishment of the Doctor, the thoroughly human figures of Genestas and the rest, save the situation from this and other drawbacks. We are not in the Cockaigne of perfectibility, where Marmontel and Godwin disport themselves; we are in a very practical place, where time-bargains in barley are made, and you pay the respectable, if not lavish, board of ten francs per day for entertainment to man and beast.

And yet, explain as we will, there will always remain

something inexplicable in the appeal of such a book as the "Médecin de Campagne." This helps, and that, and the other; we can see what change might have damaged the effect, and what have endangered it altogether. We must, of course, acknowledge that as it is there are *longueurs*, intrusions of Saint Simonian jargon, passages of *galimatias* and of preaching. But of what in strictness produces the good effect we can only say one thing, and that is, it was the genius of Balzac working as it listed and as it knew how to work.

The book was originally published by Mme. Delaunay in September, 1833, in two volumes and thirty-six chapters with headings. Next year it was republished in four volumes by Werdet, and the last fifteen chapters were thrown together into four. In 1836 it reappeared with dedication and date, but with the divisions further reduced to seven; being those which here appear, with the addition of two, "La Fosseuse" and "Propos de Braves Gens" between "A Travers Champs" and "Le Napoléon du Peuple." These two were removed in 1839, when it was published in a single volume by Charpentier. In all these issues the book was independent. It became a "Scène de La Vie de Campagne" in 1846, and was then admitted into the "Comédie." The separate issues of Goguelat's story referred to above made their appearance first in "L'Europe Littéraire" for June 19, 1833 (*before* the book form), and then with the imprint of a sort of syndicate of publishers in 1842.

THE COUNTRY DOCTOR

"For a wounded heart—shadow and silence"

To my Mother

I

THE COUNTRYSIDE AND THE MAN

ON A LOVELY spring morning in the year 1829, a man of fifty or thereabout was wending his way on horseback along the mountain road that leads to a large village near the Grande Chartreuse. This village is the market town of a populous canton that lies within the limits of a valley of some considerable length. The melting of the snows had filled the bowlder-strewn bed of the torrent (often dry) that flows through this valley, which is closely shut in between two parallel mountain barriers, above which the peaks of Savoy and of Dauphiné tower on every side.

All the scenery of the country that lies between the chain of the two Mauriennes is very much alike; yet here in the district through which the stranger was travelling there are soft undulations of the land, and varying effects of light which might be sought for elsewhere in vain. Sometimes the valley, suddenly widening, spreads out a soft irregularly-shaped carpet of grass before the eyes; a meadow constantly watered by the mountain streams that keep it fresh and green at all seasons of the year. Sometimes a roughly-built saw-mill appears in a picturesque position, with its stacks of long pine trunks with the bark peeled off, and its mill stream, brought from the bed of the torrent in great square wooden pipes, with masses of dripping filament issuing from every crack. Little cottages, scattered here and there, with their gardens full of blossoming fruit trees, call up the ideas that are aroused by the sight of industrious poverty; while the

thought of ease, secured after long years of toil, is suggested by some larger houses further on, with their red roofs of flat round tiles, shaped like the scales of a fish. There is no door, moreover, that does not duly exhibit a basket in which the cheeses are hung up to dry. Every roadside and every croft is adorned with vines; which here, as in Italy, they train to grow about dwarf elm trees, whose leaves are stripped off to feed the cattle.

Nature, in her caprice, has brought the sloping hills on either side so near together in some places that there is no room for fields, or buildings, or peasants' huts. Nothing lies between them but the torrent, roaring over its waterfalls between two lofty walls of granite that rise above it, their sides covered with the leafage of tall beeches and dark fir trees to the height of a hundred feet. The trees, with their different kinds of foliage, rise up straight and tall, fantastically colored by patches of lichen, forming magnificent colonnades, with a line of straggling hedgerow of guelder rose, briar rose, box and arbutus above and below the roadway at their feet. The subtle perfume of this undergrowth was mingled just then with scents from the wild mountain region and with the aromatic fragrance of young larch shoots, budding poplars, and resinous pines.

Here and there a wreath of mist about the heights sometimes hid and sometimes gave glimpses of the gray crags, that seemed as dim and vague as the soft flecks of cloud dispersed among them. The whole face of the country changed every moment with the changing light in the sky; the hues of the mountains, the soft shades of their lower slopes, the very shape of the valleys seemed to vary continually. A ray of sunlight through the tree-stems, a clear space made by nature in the woods, or a landslip here and there, coming as a surprise to make a contrast in the foreground, made up an endless series of pictures delightful to see amid the silence, at the time of year when all things grow young, and when the sun fills a cloudless heaven with a blaze of light. In short, it was a fair land—it was the land of France!

The traveller was a tall man, dressed from head to foot in a suit of blue cloth, which must have been brushed just as carefully every morning as the glossy coat of his horse. He held himself firm and erect in the saddle like an old cavalry officer. Even if his black cravat and doe-skin gloves, the pistols that filled his holsters, and the valise securely fastened to the crupper behind him had not combined to mark him out as a soldier, the air of unconcern that sat on his face, his regular features (scarred though they were with the smallpox), his determined manner, self-reliant expression, and the way he held his head, all revealed the habits acquired through military discipline, of which a soldier can never quite divest himself, even after he has retired from service into private life.

Any other traveller would have been filled with wonder at the loveliness of this Alpine region, which grows so bright and smiling as it becomes merged in the great valley systems of southern France; but the officer, who no doubt had previously traversed a country across which the French armies had been drafted in the course of Napoleon's wars, enjoyed the view before him without appearing to be surprised by the many changes that swept across it. It would seem that Napoleon has extinguished in his soldiers the sensation of wonder; for an impassive face is a sure token by which you may know the men who served erewhile under the short-lived yet deathless Eagles of the great Emperor. The traveller was, in fact, one of those soldiers (seldom met with nowadays) whom shot and shell have respected, although they have borne their part on every battlefield where Napoleon commanded.

There had been nothing unusual in his life. He had fought valiantly in the ranks as a simple and loyal soldier, doing his duty as faithfully by night as by day, and whether in or out of his officer's sight. He had never dealt a sabre stroke in vain, and was incapable of giving one too many. If he wore at his buttonhole the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor, it was because the unanimous voice of his

regiment had singled him out as the man who best deserved to receive it after the battle of Borodino.

He belonged to that small minority of undemonstrative retiring natures who are always at peace with themselves, and who are conscious of a feeling of humiliation at the mere thought of making a request, no matter what its nature may be. So promotion had come to him tardily, and by virtue of the slowly-working laws of seniority. He had been made a sub-lieutenant in 1802, but it was not until 1829 that he became a major, in spite of the grayness of his mustaches. His life had been so blameless that no man in the army, not even the General himself, could approach him without an involuntary feeling of respect. It is possible that he was not forgiven for this indisputable superiority by those who ranked above him; but, on the other hand, there was not one of his men that did not feel for him something of the affection of children for a good mother. For them he knew how to be at once indulgent and severe. He himself had also once served in the ranks, and knew the sorry joys and gayly-endured hardships of the soldier's lot. He knew the errors that may be passed over and the faults that must be punished in his men—"his children," as he always called them—and when on campaign he readily gave them leave to forage for provision for man and horse among the wealthier classes.

His own personal history lay buried beneath the deepest reserve. Like almost every military man in Europe, he had only seen the world through cannon smoke, or in the brief intervals of peace that occurred so seldom during the Emperor's continual wars with the rest of Europe. Had he or had he not thought of marriage? The question remained unsettled. Although no one doubted that Commandant Genestas had made conquests during his sojourn in town after town and country after country where he had taken part in the festivities given and received by the officers, yet no one knew this for a certainty. There was no prudery about him; he would not decline to join a pleasure party;

he in no way offended against military standards; but when questioned as to his affairs of the heart, he either kept silence or answered with a jest. To the words, "How about you, commandant?" addressed to him by an officer over the wine, his reply was, "Pass the bottle, gentlemen."

M. Pierre Joseph Genestas was an unostentatious kind of Bayard. There was nothing romantic nor picturesque about him—he was too thoroughly commonplace. His ways of living were those of a well-to-do man. Although he had nothing besides his pay, and his pension was all that he had to look to in the future, the major always kept two years' pay untouched, and never spent his allowances, like some shrewd old men of business with whom cautious prudence has almost become a mania. He was so little of a gambler that if, when in company, some one was wanted to cut in or to take a bet at écarté, he usually fixed his eyes on his boots; but though he did not allow himself any extravagances, he conformed in every way to custom.

His uniforms lasted longer than those of any other officer in his regiment, as a consequence of the sedulously careful habits that somewhat straitened means had so instilled into him that they had come to be like a second nature. Perhaps he might have been suspected of meanness if it had not been for the fact that with wonderful disinterestedness and all a comrade's readiness, his purse would be opened for some hare-brained boy who had ruined himself at cards or by some other folly. He did a service of this kind with such thoughtful tact that it seemed as though he himself had at one time lost heavy sums at play; he never considered that he had any right to control the actions of his debtor; he never made mention of the loan. He was the child of his company; he was alone in the world, so he had adopted the army for his fatherland, and the regiment for his family. Very rarely, therefore, did any one seek the motives underlying his praiseworthy turn for thrift; for it pleased others, for the most part, to set it down to a not unnatural wish to increase the amount of the savings that were to render his

old age comfortable. Till the eve of his promotion to the rank of lieutenant-colonel of cavalry it was fair to suppose that it was his ambition to retire in the course of some campaign with a colonel's epaulets and pension.

If Genestas's name came up when the officers gossiped after drill, they were wont to classify him among the men who begin with taking the good-conduct prize at school, and who, throughout the term of their natural lives, continue to be punctilious, conscientious, and passionless—as good as white bread, and just as insipid. Thoughtful minds, however, regarded him very differently. Not seldom it would happen that a glance, or an expression as full of significance as the utterance of a savage, would drop from him and bear witness to past storms in his soul; and a careful study of his placid brow revealed a power of stifling down and repressing his passions into inner depths, that had been dearly bought by a lengthy acquaintance with the perils and disastrous hazards of war. An officer who had only just joined the regiment, the son of a peer of France, had said one day of Genestas, that he would have made one of the most conscientious of priests, or the most upright of tradesmen.

"Add, the least of a courtier among marquises," put in Genestas, scanning the young puppy, who did not know that his commandant could overhear him.

There was a burst of laughter at the words, for the lieutenant's father cringed to all the powers that be; he was a man of supple intellect, accustomed to jump with every change of Government, and his son took after him.

Men like Genestas are met with now and again in the French army; natures that show themselves to be wholly great at need, and relapse into their ordinary simplicity when the action is over; men that are little mindful of fame and reputation, and utterly forgetful of danger. Perhaps there are many more of them than the shortcomings of our own characters will allow us to imagine. Yet, for all that, any one who believed that Genestas was perfect would

be strangely deceiving himself. The major was suspicious, given to violent outbursts of anger, and apt to be tiresome in argument; he was full of national prejudices, and, above all things, would insist that he was in the right, when he was, as a matter of fact, in the wrong. He retained the liking for good wine that he had acquired in the ranks. If he rose from a banquet with all the gravity befitting his position, he seemed serious and pensive, and had no mind at such times to admit any one into his confidence.

Finally, although he was sufficiently acquainted with the customs of society and with the laws of politeness, to which he conformed as rigidly as if they had been military regulations; though he had real mental power, both natural and acquired; and although he had mastered the art of handling men, the science of tactics, the theory of sabre play, and the mysteries of the farrier's craft, his learning had been prodigiously neglected. He knew in a hazy kind of way that Cæsar was a Roman Consul, or an Emperor, and that Alexander was either a Greek or a Macedonian; he would have conceded either quality or origin in both cases without discussion. If the conversation turned on science or history, he was wont to become thoughtful, and to confine his share in it to little approving nods, like a man who by dint of profound thought has arrived at scepticism.

When, at Schönbrunn, on May 13, 1809, Napoleon wrote the bulletin addressed to the Grand Army, then the masters of Vienna, in which he said that *like Medea, the Austrian princes had slain their children with their own hands;* Genestas, who had been recently made a captain, did not wish to compromise his newly conferred dignity by asking who Medea was; he relied upon Napoleon's character, and felt quite sure that the Emperor was incapable of making any announcement not in proper form to the Grand Army and the House of Austria. So he thought that Medea was some archduchess whose conduct laid her open to criticism. Still, as the matter might have some bearing on the art of war, he felt uneasy about the Medea of the bulletin until a day ar-

rived, when Mlle. Raucourt revived the tragedy of Medea. The captain saw the placard, and did not fail to repair to the Théâtre Français that evening, to see the celebrated actress in her mythological role, concerning which he gained some information from his neighbors.

A man, however, who as a private soldier had possessed sufficient force of character to learn to read, write, and cipher, could clearly understand that as a captain he ought to continue his education. So from this time forth he read new books and romances with avidity, in this way gaining a half-knowledge, of which he made a very fair use. He went so far in his gratitude to his teachers as to undertake the defence of Pigault-Lebrun, remarking that in his opinion he was instructive and not seldom profound.

This officer, whose acquired practical wisdom did not allow him to make any journey in vain, had just come from Grenoble, and was on his way to the Grande Chartreuse, after obtaining on the previous evening a week's leave of absence from his colonel. He had not expected that the journey would be a long one; but when, league after league, he had been misled as to the distance by the lying statements of the peasants, he thought it would be prudent not to venture any further without fortifying the inner man. Small as were his chances of finding any housewife in her dwelling at a time when every one was hard at work in the fields, he stopped before a little cluster of cottages that stood about a piece of land common to all of them, more or less describing a square, which was open to all comers.

The surface of the soil thus held in conjoint ownership was hard and carefully swept, but intersected by open drains. Roses, ivy, and tall grasses grew over the cracked and disjointed walls. Some rags were drying on a miserable currant bush that stood at the entrance of the square. A pig wallowing in a heap of straw was the first inhabitant encountered by Genestas. At the sound of horse hoofs the creature grunted, raised its head, and put a great black cat to flight. A young peasant girl, who was carrying a bundle of grass

on her head, suddenly appeared, followed at a distance by four little brats, clad in rags, it is true, but vigorous, sunburned, picturesque, bold-eyed, and riotous; thorough little imps, looking like angels. The sun shone down with an indescribable purifying influence upon the air, the wretched cottages, the heaps of refuse, and the unkempt little crew.

The soldier asked whether it was possible to obtain a cup of milk. All the answer the girl made him was a hoarse cry. An old woman suddenly appeared on the threshold of one of the cabins, and the young peasant girl passed on into a cow-shed, with a gesture that pointed out the aforesaid old woman, toward whom Genestas went; taking care at the same time to keep a tight hold on his horse, lest the children who already were running about under his hoofs should be hurt. He repeated his request, with which the housewife flatly refused to comply. She would not, she said, disturb the cream on the pans full of milk from which butter was to be made. The officer overcame this objection by undertaking to repay her amply for the wasted cream, and then tied up his horse at the door, and went inside the cottage.

The four children belonging to the woman all appeared to be of the same age—an odd circumstance which struck the commandant. A fifth clung about her skirts; a weak, pale, sickly-looking child, who doubtless needed more care than the others, and who on that account was the best beloved, the Benjamin of the family.

Genestas seated himself in a corner by the fireless hearth. A sublime symbol met his eyes on the high mantel-shelf above him—a colored plaster cast of the Virgin with the Child Jesus in her arms. Bare earth made the flooring of the cottage. It had been beaten level in the first instance, but in course of time it had grown rough and uneven, so that though it was clean, its ruggedness was not unlike that of the magnified rind of an orange. A sabot filled with salt, a frying-pan, and a large kettle hung inside the chimney. The further end of the room was completely filled by a four-post bedstead, with a scalloped valance for decoration. The

walls were black; there was an opening to admit the light above the worm-eaten door; and here and there were a few stools consisting of rough blocks of beech-wood, each set upon three wooden legs; a hutch for bread, a large wooden dipper, a bucket and some earthen milk-pans, a spinning-wheel on the top of the bread-hutch, and a few wicker mats for draining cheeses. Such were the ornaments and household furniture of the wretched dwelling.

The officer, who had been absorbed in flicking his riding-whip against the floor, presently became a witness to a piece of by-play, all unsuspicious though he was that any drama was about to unfold itself. No sooner had the old woman, followed by her scald-headed Benjamin, disappeared through a door that led into her dairy, than the four children, after having stared at the soldier as long as they wished, drove away the pig by way of a beginning. This animal, their accustomed playmate, having come as far as the threshold, the little brats made such an energetic attack upon him that he was forced to beat a hasty retreat. When the enemy had been driven without, the children besieged the latch of a door that gave way before their united efforts, and slipped out of the worn staple that held it; and finally they bolted into a kind of fruit-loft, where they very soon fell to munching the dried plums, to the amusement of the commandant, who watched this spectacle. The old woman, with the face like parchment and the dirty ragged clothing, came back at this moment, with a jug of milk for her visitor in her hand.

"Oh! you good-for-nothings!" cried she.

She ran to the children, clutched an arm of each child, bundled them into the room, and carefully closed the door of her storehouse of plenty. But she did not take their prunes away from them.

"Now, then, be good, my pets! If one did not look after them," she went on, looking at Genestas, "they would eat up the whole lot of prunes, the madcaps!"

Then she seated herself on a three-legged stool, drew the little weakling between her knees, and began to comb and

wash his head with a woman's skill and with motherly assiduity. The four small thieves hung about. Some of them stood, others leaned against the bed or the bread-hutch. They gnawed their prunes without saying a word, but they kept their sly and mischievous eyes fixed upon the stranger. In spite of grimy countenances and noses that stood in need of wiping, they all looked strong and healthy.

"Are they your children?" the soldier asked the old woman.

"Asking your pardon, sir, they are charity-children. They give me three francs a month and a pound's weight of soap for each of them."

"But it must cost you twice as much as that to keep them, good woman?"

"That is just what M. Benassis tells me, sir; but if other folk will board the children for the same money, one has to make it do. Nobody wants the children, but for all that there is a good deal of performance to go through before they will let us have them. When the milk we give them comes to nothing, they cost us scarcely anything. Besides that, three francs is a great deal, sir; there are fifteen francs coming in, to say nothing of the five pounds' weight of soap. In our part of the world you would simply have to wear your life out before you would make ten sous a day."

"Then you have some land of your own?" asked the commandant.

"No, sir. I had some land once when my husband was alive; since he died I have done so badly that I had to sell it."

"Why, how do you reach the year's end without debts?" Genestas went on, "when you bring up children for a livelihood and wash and feed them on two sous a day?"

"Well, we never get to St. Sylvester's Day without debt, sir," she went on without ceasing to comb the child's hair. "But so it is—Providence helps us out. I have a couple of cows. Then my daughter and I do some gleaning at harvest-time, and in winter we pick up firewood. Then at night we

spin. Ah! we never want to see another winter like this last one, that is certain! I owe the miller seventy-five francs for flour. Luckily he is M. Benassis's miller. M. Benassis, ah! he is a friend to poor people. He has never asked for his due from anybody, and he will not begin with us. Besides, our cow has a calf, and that will set us a bit straighter."

The four orphans for whom the old woman's affection represented all human guardianship had come to an end of their prunes. As their foster-mother's attention was taken up by the officer with whom she was chatting, they seized the opportunity, and banded themselves together in a compact file, so as to make yet another assault upon the latch of the door that stood between them and the tempting heap of dried plums. They advanced to the attack, not like French soldiers, but as stealthily as Germans, impelled by frank animal greediness.

"Oh! you little rogues! Do you want to finish them up?"

The old woman rose, caught the strongest of the four, administered a gentle slap on the back, and flung him out of the house. Not a tear did he shed, but the others remained breathless with astonishment.

"They give you a lot of trouble—"

"Oh! no, sir, but they can smell the prunes, the little dears. If I were to leave them alone here for a moment, they would stuff themselves with them."

"You are very fond of them?"

The old woman raised her head at this, and looked at him with gentle malice in her eyes.

"Fond of them!" she said. "I have had to part with three of them already. I only have the care of them until they are six years old," she went on with a sigh.

"But where are your own children?"

"I have lost them."

"How old are you?" Genestas asked, to efface the impression left by his last question.

"I am thirty-eight years old, sir. It will be two years come next St. John's Day since my husband died."

She finished dressing the poor sickly mite, who seemed to thank her by a loving look in his faded eyes.

"What a life of toil and self-denial!" thought the cavalry officer.

Beneath a roof worthy of the stable wherein Jesus Christ was born, the hardest duties of motherhood were fulfilled cheerfully and without consciousness of merit. What hearts were these that lay so deeply buried in neglect and obscurity! What wealth, and what poverty! Soldiers, better than other men, can appreciate the element of grandeur to be found in heroism in sabots, in the Evangel clad in rags. The Book may be found elsewhere, adorned, embellished, tricked out in silk and satin and brocade, but here, of a surety, dwelt the spirit of the Book. It was impossible to doubt that Heaven had some holy purpose underlying it all, at the sight of the woman who had taken a mother's lot upon herself, as Jesus Christ had taken the form of a man, who gleaned and suffered and ran into debt for her little waifs; a woman who defrauded herself in her reckonings, and would not own that she was ruining herself that she might be a Mother. One was constrained to admit, at the sight of her, that the good upon earth have something in common with the angels in heaven; Commandant Genestas shook his head as he looked at her.

"Is M. Benassis a clever doctor?" he asked at last.

"I do not know, sir, but he cures poor people for nothing."

"It seems to me that this is a man and no mistake!" he went on, speaking to himself.

"Oh! yes, sir, and a good man too! There is scarcely any one hereabout that does not put his name in their prayers, morning and night!"

"That is for you, mother," said the soldier, as he gave her several coins, "and that is for the children," he went on, as he added another crown. "Is M. Benassis's house still a long way off?" he asked, when he had mounted his horse.

"Oh! no, sir, a bare league at most."

The commandant set out, fully persuaded that two leagues remained ahead of him. Yet after all he soon caught a glimpse through the trees of the little town's first cluster of houses, and then of all the roofs that crowded about a conical steeple, whose slates were secured to the angles of the wooden framework by sheets of tin that glittered in the sun. This sort of roof, which has a peculiar appearance, denotes the nearness of the borders of Savoy, where it is very common. The valley is wide at this particular point, and a fair number of houses pleasantly situated, either in the little plain or along the side of the mountain stream, lend human interest to the well-tilled spot, a stronghold with no apparent outlet among the mountains that surround it.

It was noon when Genestas reined in his horse beneath an avenue of elm-trees half-way up the hillside, and only a few paces from the town, to ask the group of children who stood before him for M. Benassis's house. At first the children looked at each other, then they scrutinized the stranger with the expression that they usually wear when they set eyes upon anything for the first time; a different curiosity and a different thought in every little face. Then the boldest and merriest of the band, a little bright-eyed urchin, with bare, muddy feet, repeated his words over again, in child fashion.

"M. Benassis's house, sir?" adding, "I will show you the way there."

He walked along in front of the horse, prompted quite as much by a wish to gain a kind of importance by being in the stranger's company, as by a child's love of being useful, or the imperative craving to be doing something, that possesses mind and body at his age. The officer followed him for the entire length of the principal street of the country town. The way was paved with cobblestones, and wound in and out among the houses, which their owners had erected along its course in the most arbitrary fashion. In one place

a bakehouse had been built out into the middle of the roadway; in another a gable protruded, partially obstructing the passage, and yet further on a mountain stream flowed across it in a runnel. Genestas noticed a fair number of roofs of tarred shingle, but yet more of them were thatched; a few were tiled, and some seven or eight (belonging no doubt to the curé, the justice of the peace, and some of the wealthier townsmen) were covered with slates. There was a total absence of regard for appearances befitting a village at the end of the world, which had nothing beyond it, and no connection with any other place. The people who lived in it seemed to belong to one family that dwelt beyond the limits of the bustling world, with which the collector of taxes and a few ties of the very slenderest alone served to connect them.

When Genestas had gone a step or two further, he saw on the mountain side a broad road that rose above the village. Clearly there must be an old town and a new town; and, indeed, when the commandant reached a spot where he could slacken the pace of his horse, he could easily see between the houses some well-built dwellings whose new roofs brightened the old-fashioned village. An avenue of trees rose above these new houses, and from among them came the confused sounds of several industries. He heard the songs peculiar to busy toilers, a murmur of many workshops, the rasping of files, and the sound of falling hammers. He saw the thin lines of smoke from the chimneys of each household, and the more copious outpourings from the forges of the van-builder, the blacksmith, and the farrier. At length, at the very end of the village toward which his guide was taking him, Genestas beheld scattered farms and well-tilled fields and plantations of trees in thorough order. It might have been a little corner of Brie, so hidden away in a great fold of the land that at first sight its existence would not be suspected between the little town and the mountains that closed the country round.

Presently the child stopped.

"There is the door of *his* house," he remarked.

The officer dismounted and passed his arm through the bridle. Then, thinking that the laborer is worthy of his hire, he drew a few sous from his waistcoat pocket, and held them out to the child, who looked astonished at this, opened his eyes very wide, and stayed on, without thanking him, to watch what the stranger would do next.

"Civilization has not made much headway hereabout," thought Genestas; "the religion of work is in full force, and begging has not yet come thus far."

His guide, more from curiosity than from any interested motive, propped himself against the wall that rose to the height of a man's elbow. Upon this wall, which inclosed the yard belonging to the house, there ran a black wooden railing on either side of the square pillars of the gates. The lower part of the gates themselves was of solid wood that had been painted gray at some period in the past; the upper part consisted of a grating of yellowish spear-shaped bars. These decorations, which had lost all their color, gradually rose on either half of the gates till they reached the centre where they met; their spikes forming, when both leaves were shut, an outline similar to that of a pine-cone. The worm-eaten gates themselves, with their patches of velvet lichen, were almost destroyed by the alternate action of sun and rain. A few aloe plants and some chance-sown pellitory grew on the tops of the square pillars of the gates, which all but concealed the stems of a couple of thornless acacias that raised their tufted spikes, like a pair of green powder-puffs, in the yard.

The condition of the gateway revealed a certain carelessness in its owner which did not seem to suit the officer's turn of mind. He knitted his brows like a man who is obliged to relinquish some illusion. We usually judge others by our own standard; and although we indulgently forgive our own shortcomings in them, we condemn them harshly for the lack of our special virtues. If the commandant had expected M. Benassis to be a methodical or practical man, there were unmistakable indications of absolute indifference as to his

material concerns in the state of the gates of his house. A soldier possessed by Genestas's passion for domestic economy could not help at once drawing inferences as to the life and character of its owner from the gateway before him; and this, in spite of his habits of circumspection, he in nowise failed to do. The gates were left ajar, moreover—another piece of carelessness!

Encouraged by this countrified trust in all comers, the officer entered the yard without ceremony, and tethered his horse to the bars of the gate. While he was knotting the bridle, a neighing sound from the stable caused both horse and rider to turn their eyes involuntarily in that direction. The door opened, and an old servant put out his head. He wore a red woollen bonnet, exactly like the Phrygian cap in which Liberty is tricked out, a piece of headgear in common use in this country.

As there was room for several horses, this worthy individual, after inquiring whether Genestas had come to see M. Benassis, offered the hospitality of the stable to the newly-arrived steed, a very fine animal, at which he looked with an expression of admiring affection. The commandant followed his horse to see how things were to go with it. The stable was clean, there was plenty of litter, and there was the same peculiar air of sleek content about M. Benassis's pair of horses that distinguishes the curé's horse from all the rest of his tribe. A maidservant from within the house came out upon the flight of steps and waited. She appeared to be the proper authority to whom the stranger's inquiries were to be addressed, although the stableman had already told him that M. Benassis was not at home.

"The master has gone to the flour-mill," said he. "If you like to overtake him, you have only to go along the path that leads to the meadow; and the mill is at the end of it."

Genestas preferred seeing the country to waiting about indefinitely for Benassis's return, so he set out along the way that led to the flour-mill. When he had gone beyond the irregular line traced by the town upon the hillside, he

came in sight of the mill and the valley, and of one of the loveliest landscapes that he had ever seen.

The mountains bar the course of the river, which forms a little lake at their feet, and raise their crests above it, tier on tier. Their many valleys are revealed by the changing hues of the light, or by the more or less clear outlines of the mountain ridges fledged with their dark forests of pines. The mill had not long been built. It stood just where the mountain stream fell into the little lake. There was all the charm about it peculiar to a lonely house surrounded by water and hidden away behind the heads of a few trees that love to grow by the waterside. On the further bank of the river, at the foot of a mountain with a faint red glow of sunset upon its highest crest, Genestas caught a glimpse of a dozen deserted cottages. All the windows and doors had been taken away, and sufficiently large holes were conspicuous in the dilapidated roofs, but the surrounding land was laid out in fields that were highly cultivated, and the old garden spaces had been turned into meadows, watered by a system of irrigation as artfully contrived as that in use in Limousin. Unconsciously the commandant paused to look at the ruins of the village before him.

How is it that men can never behold any ruins, even of the humblest kind, without feeling deeply stirred? Doubtless it is because they seem to be a typical representation of evil fortune whose weight is felt so differently by different natures. The thought of death is called up by a churchyard, but a deserted village puts us in mind of the sorrows of life; death is but one misfortune always foreseen, but the sorrows of life are infinite. Does not the thought of the infinite underlie all great melancholy?

The officer reached the stony path by the mill-pond before he could hit upon an explanation of this deserted village. The miller's lad was sitting on some sacks of corn near the door of the house. Genestas asked for M. Benassis.

"M. Benassis went over there," said the miller, pointing out one of the ruined cottages.

"Has the village been burned down?" asked the commandant.

"No, sir."

"Then how did it come to be in this state?" inquired Genestas.

"Ah! how?" the miller answered, as he shrugged his shoulders and went indoors; "M. Benassis will tell you that."

The officer went over a rough sort of bridge built up of bowlders taken from the torrent bed, and soon reached the house that had been pointed out to him. The thatched roof of the dwelling was still entire; it was covered with moss indeed, but there were no holes in it, and the door and its fastenings seemed to be in good repair. Genestas saw a fire on the hearth as he entered, an old woman kneeling in the chimney-corner before a sick man seated in a chair, and another man, who was standing with his face turned toward the fireplace. The house consisted of a single room, which was lighted by a wretched window covered with linen cloth. The floor was of beaten earth; the chair, a table, and a truckle bed comprised the whole of the furniture. The commandant had never seen anything so poor and bare, not even in Russia, where the moujik's huts are like the dens of wild beasts. Nothing within it spoke of ordinary life; there were not even the simplest appliances for cooking food of the commonest description. It might have been a dog kennel without a drinking-pan. But for the truckle bed, a smock-frock hanging from a nail, and some sabots filled with straw, which composed the invalid's entire wardrobe, this cottage would have looked as empty as the others. The aged peasant woman upon her knees was devoting all her attention to keeping the sufferer's feet in a tub filled with a brown liquid. Hearing a footstep and the clank of spurs, which sounded strangely in ears accustomed to the plodding pace of country folk, the man turned toward Genestas. A sort of surprise, in which the old woman shared, was visible in his face.

"There is no need to ask if you are M. Benassis," said the soldier. "You will pardon me, sir, if as a stranger impatient to see you, I have come to seek you on your field of battle, instead of awaiting you at your house. Pray do not disturb yourself; go on with what you are doing. When it is over, I will tell you the purpose of my visit."

Genestas half seated himself upon the edge of the table, and remained silent. The firelight shone more brightly in the room than the faint rays of the sun, for the mountain crests intercepted them, so that they seldom reached this corner of the valley. A few branches of resinous pinewood made a bright blaze, and it was by the light of this fire that the soldier saw the face of the man toward whom he was drawn by a secret motive, by a wish to seek him out, to study and to know him thoroughly well. M. Benassis, the local doctor, heard Genestas with indifference, and with folded arms he returned his bow, and went back to his patient, quite unaware that he was being subjected to a scrutiny as earnest as that which the soldier turned upon him.

Benassis was a man of ordinary height, broad-shouldered and deep-chested. A capacious green overcoat, buttoned up to the chin, prevented the officer from observing any characteristic details of his personal appearance; but his dark and motionless figure served as a strong relief to his face, which caught the bright light of the blazing fire. The face was not unlike that of a satyr; there was the same slightly protruding forehead, full, in this case, of prominences, all more or less denoting character; the same turned-up nose, with a sprightly cleavage at the tip; the same high cheek-bones. The lines of the mouth were crooked; the lips, thick and red. The chin turned sharply upward. There was an alert, animated look in the brown eyes, to which their pearly whites gave great brightness, and which expressed passions now subdued. His iron-gray hair, the deep wrinkles in his face, the bushy eyebrows that had grown white already, the veins on his protuberant nose,

the tanned face covered with red blotches, everything about him, in short, indicated a man of fifty and the hard work of his profession. The officer could come to no conclusion as to the capacity of the head, which was covered by a close cap; but hidden though it was, it seemed to him to be one of the square-shaped kind that gave rise to the expression "square-headed." Genestas was accustomed to read the indications that mark the features of men destined to do great things, since he had been brought into close relations with the energetic natures sought out by Napoleon; so he suspected that there must be some mystery in this life of obscurity, and said to himself as he looked at the remarkable face before him—"How comes it that he is still a country doctor?"

When he had made a careful study of this countenance, that, in spite of its resemblance to other human faces, revealed an inner life nowise in harmony with a commonplace exterior, he could not help sharing the doctor's interest in his patient; and the sight of that patient completely changed the current of his thoughts.

Much as the old cavalry officer had seen in the course of his soldier's career, he felt a thrill of surprise and horror at the sight of a human face which could never have been lighted up with thought—a livid face in which a look of dumb suffering showed so plainly—the same look that is sometimes worn by a child too young to speak, and too weak to cry any longer; in short, it was the wholly animal face of an old dying crétin. The crétin was the one variety of the human species with which the commandant had not yet come in contact. At the sight of the deep, circular folds of skin on the forehead, the sodden, fishlike eyes, and the head, with its short, coarse, scantily-growing hair—a head utterly divested of all the faculties of the senses—who would not have experienced, as Genestas did, an instinctive feeling of repulsion for a being that had neither the physical beauty of an animal nor the mental endowments of man, who was possessed of neither instinct nor reason, and who had never

heard nor spoken any kind of articulate speech? It seemed difficult to expend any regrets over the poor wretch now visibly drawing toward the very end of an existence which had not been life in any sense of the word; yet the old woman watched him with touching anxiety, and was rubbing his legs where the hot water did not reach them with as much tenderness as if he had been her husband. Benassis himself, after a close scrutiny of the dull eyes and corpse-like face, gently took the crétin's hand and felt his pulse.

"The bath is doing no good," he said, shaking his head; "let us put him to bed again."

He lifted the inert mass himself, and carried him across to the truckle bed, from whence, no doubt, he had just taken him. Carefully he laid him at full length, and straightened the limbs that were growing cold already, putting the head and hand in position, with all the heed that a mother could bestow upon her child.

"It is all over, death is very near," added Benassis, who remained standing by the bedside.

The old woman gazed at the dying form, with her hands on her hips. A few tears stole down her cheeks. Genestas remained silent. He was unable to explain to himself how it was that the death of a being that concerned him so little should affect him so much. Unconsciously he shared the feeling of boundless pity that these hapless creatures excite among the dwellers in the sunless valleys wherein Nature has placed them. This sentiment has degenerated into a kind of religious superstition in families to which crétins belong; but does it not spring from the most beautiful of Christian virtues—from charity, and from a belief in a reward hereafter, that most effectual support of our social system, and the one thought that enables us to endure our miseries? The hope of inheriting eternal bliss helps the relations of these unhappy creatures and all others round about them to exert on a large scale, and with sublime devotion, a mother's ceaseless protecting care over an apathetic creature who does not understand it in the first instance, and

who in a little while forgets it all. Wonderful power of religion! that has brought a blind beneficence to the aid of an equally blind misery. Wherever crétins exist, there is a popular belief that the presence of one of these creatures brings luck to a family—a superstition that serves to sweeten lives which, in the midst of a town population, would be condemned by a mistaken philanthropy to submit to the harsh discipline of an asylum. In the higher end of the valley of the Isère, where crétins are very numerous, they lead an out-of-door life with the cattle which they are taught to herd. There, at any rate, they are at large, and receive the reverence due to misfortune.

A moment later the village bell clinked at slow regular intervals, to acquaint the flock with the death of one of their number. In the sound that reached the cottage but faintly across the intervening space there was a thought of religion which seemed to fill it with a melancholy peace. The tread of many feet echoed up the road, giving notice of an approaching crowd of people—a crowd that uttered not a word. Then suddenly the chanting of the Church broke the stillness, calling up the confused thoughts that take possession of the most sceptical minds, and compel them to yield to the influence of the touching harmonies of the human voice. The Church was coming to the aid of a creature that knew her not. The curé appeared, preceded by a choir-boy, who bore the crucifix, and followed by the sacristan carrying the vase of holy water, and by some fifty women, old men, and children, who had all come to add their prayers to those of the Church. The doctor and the soldier looked at each other, and silently withdrew to a corner to make room for the kneeling crowd within and without the cottage. During the consoling ceremony of the Viaticum, celebrated for one who had never sinned, but to whom the Church on earth was bidding a last farewell, there were signs of real sorrow on most of the rough faces of the gathering, and tears flowed over rugged cheeks that sun and wind and labor in the fields had tanned and wrinkled. The sentiment of voluntary kin-

ship was easy to explain. There was not one in the place who had not pitied the unhappy creature, not one who would not have given him his daily bread. Had he not met with a father's care from every child, and found a mother in the merriest little girl?

"He is dead," said the curé.

The words struck his hearers with the most unfeigned dismay. The tall candles were lighted, and several people undertook to watch with the dead that night. Benassis and the soldier went out. A group of peasants in the doorway stopped the doctor to say—"Ah! if you have not saved his life, sir, it was doubtless because God wished to take him to Himself."

"I did my best, children," the doctor answered.

When they had come a few paces from the deserted village, whose last inhabitant had just died, the doctor spoke to Genestas.

"You would not believe, sir, what real solace is contained for me in what those peasants have just said. Ten years ago I was very nearly stoned to death in this village. It is empty to-day, but thirty families lived in it then."

Genestas's face and gesture so plainly expressed an inquiry that, as they went along, the doctor told him the story promised by this beginning.

"When I first settled here, sir, I found a dozen crétins in this part of the canton," and the doctor turned round to point out the ruined cottages for the officer's benefit. "All the favorable conditions for spreading the hideous disease are there; the air is stagnant, the hamlet lies in the valley bottom, close beside a torrent supplied with water by the melted snows, and the sunlight only falls on the mountain-top, so that the valley itself gets no good of the sun. Marriages among these unfortunate creatures are not forbidden by law, and in this district they are protected by superstitious notions, of whose power I had no conception—superstitions which I blamed at first, and afterward came to admire. So crétinism was in a fair way to spread all over the valley from

this spot. Was it not doing the country a great service to put a stop to this mental and physical contagion? But imperatively as the salutary changes were required, they might cost the life of any man who endeavored to bring them about. Here, as in other social spheres, if any good is to be done, we come into collision not merely with vested interests, but with something far more dangerous to meddle with—religious ideas crystallized into superstitions, the most permanent form taken by human thought. I feared nothing.

"In the first place, I sought for the position of mayor in the canton, and in this I succeeded. Then, after obtaining a verbal sanction from the prefect, and by paying down the money, I had several of these unfortunate creatures transported over to Aiguebelle, in Savoy, by night. There are a great many of them there, and they were certain to be very kindly treated. When this act of humanity came to be known, the whole countryside looked upon me as a monster. The curé preached against me. In spite of all the pains I took to explain to all the shrewder heads of the little place the immense importance of being rid of the idiots, and in spite of the fact that I gave my services gratuitously to the sick people of the district, a shot was fired at me from the corner of a wood.

"I went to the Bishop of Grenoble and asked him to change the curé. Monseigneur was good enough to allow me to choose a priest who would share in my labors, and it was my happy fortune to meet with one of those rare natures that seem to have dropped down from heaven. Then I went on with my enterprise. After preparing people's minds, I made another transportation by night, and six more crétins were taken away. In this second attempt I had the support of several people to whom I had rendered some service, and I was backed by the members of the Communal Council, for I had appealed to their parsimonious instincts, showing them how much it cost to support the poor wretches, and pointing out how largely they might gain by converting

their plots of ground (to which the idiots had no proper title) into allotments which were needed in the township.

"All the rich were on my side; but the poor, the old women, the children, and a few pig-headed people were violently opposed to me. Unluckily it so fell out that my last removal had not been completely carried out. The crétin whom you have just seen, not having returned to his house, had not been taken away, so that the next morning he was the sole remaining example of his species in the village. There were several families still living there; but though they were little better than idiots, they were, at any rate, free from the taint of crétinism. I determined to go through with my work, and came officially in open day to take the luckless creature from his dwelling. I had no sooner left my house than my intention got abroad. The crétin's friends were there before me, and in front of his hovel I found a crowd of women and children and old people, who hailed my arrival with insults accompanied by a shower of stones.

"In the midst of the uproar I should perhaps have fallen a victim to the frenzy that possesses a crowd excited by its own outcries and stirred up by one common feeling, but the crétin saved my life! The poor creature came out of his hut, and raised the clucking sound of his voice. He seemed to be an absolute ruler over the fanatical mob, for the sight of him put a sudden stop to the clamor. It occurred to me that I might arrange a compromise, and, thanks to the quiet so opportunely restored, I was able to propose and explain it. Of course, those who approved of my schemes would not dare to second me in this emergency, their support was sure to be of a purely passive kind, while these superstitious folk would exert the most active vigilance to keep their last idol among them; it was impossible, it seemed to me, to take him away from them. So I promised to leave the crétin in peace in his dwelling, with the understanding that he should live quite by himself, and that the remaining families in the village should cross the stream and come to live in the town,

in some new houses which I myself undertook to build, adding to each house a piece of ground for which the commune was to repay me later on.

"Well, my dear sir, it took me fully six months to overcome their objection to this bargain, however much it may have been to the advantage of the village families. The affection which they have for their wretched hovels in country districts is something quite unexplainable. No matter how unwholesome his hovel may be, a peasant clings far more to it than a banker does to his mansion. The reason of it? That I do not know. Perhaps thoughts and feelings are strongest in those who have but few of them, simply because they have but few. Perhaps material things count for much in the lives of those who live so little in thought; certain it is that the less they have, the dearer their possessions are to them. Perhaps, too, it is with the peasant as with the prisoner—he does not squander the powers of his soul, he centres them all upon a single idea, and this is how his feelings come to be so exceedingly strong. Pardon these reflections on the part of a man who seldom exchanges ideas with any one. But, indeed, you must not suppose, sir, that I am much taken up with these far-fetched considerations. We all have to be active and practical here.

"Alas! the fewer ideas these poor folk have in their heads, the harder it is to make them see where their real interests lie. There was nothing for it but to give my whole attention to every trifling detail of my enterprise. One and all made me the same answer, one of those sayings, filled with homely sense, to which there is no possible reply, 'But your houses are not yet built, sir!' they used to say. 'Very good,' said I, 'promise me that as soon as they are finished you will come and live in them.'

"Luckily, sir, I obtained a decision to the effect that the whole of the mountain side above the now deserted village was the property of the township. The sum of money brought in by the woods on the higher slopes paid for the building of the new houses and for the land on which they

stood. They were built forthwith; and when once one of my refractory families was fairly settled in, the rest of them were not slow to follow. The benefits of the change were so evident that even the most bigoted believer in the village, which you might call soulless as well as sunless, could not but appreciate them. The final decision in this matter, which gave some property to the commune, in the possession of which we were confirmed by the Council of State, made me a person of great importance in the canton. But what a lot of worry there was over it!" the doctor remarked, stopping short, and raising a hand which he let fall again—a gesture that spoke volumes. "No one knows, as I do, the distance between the town and the Prefecture—whence nothing comes out—and from the Prefecture to the Council of State—where nothing can be got in.

"Well, after all," he resumed, "peace be to the powers of this world! They yielded to my importunities, and that is saying a great deal. If you only knew the good that came of a carelessly scrawled signature! Why, sir, two years after I had taken these momentous trifles in hand, and had carried the matter through to the end, every poor family in the commune had two cows at least, which they pastured on the mountain side, where (without waiting this time for an authorization from the Council of State) I had established a system of irrigation by means of cross trenches, like those in Switzerland, Auvergne, and Limousin. Much to their astonishment, the townspeople saw some capital meadows springing up under their eyes, and, thanks to the improvement in the pasturage, the yield of milk was very much larger. The results of this triumph were great indeed. Every one followed the example set by my system of irrigation; cattle were multiplied; the area of meadow land and every kind of out-turn increased. I had nothing to fear after that. I could continue my efforts to improve this, as yet, untilled corner of the earth; and to civilize those who dwelt in it, whose minds had hitherto lain dormant.

"Well, sir, folk like us, who live out of the world, are

very talkative. If you ask us a question, there is no knowing where the answer will come to an end; but to cut it short—there were about seven hundred souls in the valley when I came to it, and now the population numbers some two thousand. I had gained the good opinion of every one in that matter of the last crétin; and when I had constantly shown that I could rule both mildly and firmly, I became a local oracle. I did everything that I could to win their confidence; I did not ask for it, nor did I appear to seek it; but I tried to inspire every one with the deepest respect for my character, by the scrupulous way in which I always fulfilled my engagements, even when they were of the most trifling kind. When I had pledged myself to the care of the poor creature whose death you have just witnessed, I looked after him much more effectually than any of his previous guardians had done. He has been fed and cared for as the adopted child of the commune. After a time the dwellers in the valley ended by understanding the service which I had done them in spite of themselves, but for all that they still cherish some traces of that old superstition of theirs. Far be it from me to blame them for it; has not their cult of the crétin often furnished me with an argument when I have tried to induce those who had possession of their faculties to help the unfortunate? But here we are," said Benassis, when after a moment's pause he saw the roof of his own house.

Far from expecting the slightest expression of praise or of thanks from his listener, it appeared from his way of telling the story of this episode in his administrative career that he had been moved by an unconscious desire to pour out the thoughts that filled his mind, after the manner of folk that live very retired lives.

"I have taken the liberty of putting my horse in your stable, sir," said the commandant, "for which in your goodness you will perhaps pardon me when you learn the object of my journey hither."

"Ah! yes, what is it?" asked Benassis, appearing to shake off his preoccupied mood, and to recollect that his

companion was a stranger to him. The frankness and unreserve of his nature had led him to accept Genestas as an acquaintance.

"I have heard of the almost miraculous recovery of M. Gravier of Grenoble, whom you received into your house," was the soldier's answer. "I have come to you, hoping that you will give a like attention to my case, although I have not a similar claim to your benevolence; and yet, I am possibly not undeserving of it. I am an old soldier, and wounds of long standing give me no peace. It will take you at least a week to study my condition, for the pain only comes back at intervals, and—"

"Very good, sir," Benassis broke in; "M. Gravier's room is in readiness. Come in."

They went into the house, the doctor flinging open the door with an eagerness that Genestas attributed to his pleasure at receiving a boarder.

"Jacquotte!" Benassis called out. "This gentleman will dine with us."

"But would it not be as well for us to settle about the payment?"

"Payment for what?" inquired the doctor.

"For my board. You cannot keep me and my horse as well, without—"

"If you are wealthy, you will repay me amply," Benassis replied; "and if you are not, I will take nothing whatever."

"Nothing whatever seems to me to be too dear," said Genestas. "But, rich or poor, will ten francs a day (not including your professional services) be acceptable to you?"

"Nothing could be less acceptable to me than payment for the pleasure of entertaining a visitor," the doctor answered, knitting his brows; "and as to my advice, you shall have it if I like you, and not unless. Rich people shall not have my time by paying for it; it belongs exclusively to the folk here in the valley. I do not care about fame or fortune, and I look for neither praise nor gratitude from my patients. Any money which you may pay me will go to the druggists

in Grenoble, to pay for the medicine required by the poor of the neighborhood."

Any one who had heard the words flung out, abruptly, it is true, but without a trace of bitterness in them, would have said to himself with Genestas, "Here is a man made of good human clay."

"Well, then, I will pay you ten francs a day, sir," the soldier answered, returning to the charge with wonted pertinacity, "and you will do as you choose after that. We shall understand each other better, now that the question is settled," he added, grasping the doctor's hand with eager cordiality. "In spite of my ten francs, you shall see that I am by no means a Tartar."

After this passage of arms, in which Benassis showed not the slightest sign of a wish to appear generous or to pose as a philanthropist, the supposed invalid entered his doctor's house. Everything within it was in keeping with the ruinous state of the gateway, and with the clothing worn by its owner. There was an utter disregard for everything not essentially useful, which was visible even in the smallest trifles. Benassis took Genestas through the kitchen, that being the shortest way to the dining-room.

Had the said kitchen belonged to an inn it could not have been more smoke-begrimed; and if there was a sufficiency of cooking pots within its precincts, this lavish supply was Jacquotte's doing—Jacquotte who had formerly been the curé's housekeeper—Jacquotte who always said "we," and who ruled supreme over the doctor's household. If, for instance, there was a brightly polished warming-pan above the mantel-shelf, it probably hung there because Jacquotte liked to sleep warm of a winter night, which led her incidentally to warm her master's sheets. He never took a thought about anything; so she was wont to say.

It was on account of a defect, which any one else would have found intolerable, that Benassis had taken her into his service. Jacquotte had a mind to rule the house, and a woman who would rule his house was the very person that

the doctor wanted. So Jacquotte bought and sold, made alterations about the place, set up and took down, arranged and disarranged everything at her own sweet will; her master had never raised a murmur. Over the yard, the stable, the manservant and the kitchen, in fact, over the whole house and garden and its master, Jacquotte's sway was absolute. She looked out fresh linen, saw to the washing, and laid in provisions without consulting anybody. She decided everything that went on in the house, and the date when the pigs were to be killed. She scolded the gardener, decreed the menu at breakfast and dinner, and went from cellar to garret, and from garret to cellar, setting everything to rights according to her notions, without a word of opposition of any sort or description. Benassis had made but two stipulations—he wished to dine at six o'clock, and that the household expenses should not exceed a certain fixed sum every month.

A woman whom every one obeys in this way is always singing, so Jacquotte laughed and warbled on the staircase; she was always humming something when she was not singing, and singing when she was not humming. Jacquotte had a natural liking for cleanliness, so she kept the house neat and clean. If her tastes had been different, it would have been a sad thing for M. Benassis (so she was wont to say), for the poor man was so little particular that you might feed him on cabbage for partridges, and he would not find it out; and if it were not for her, he would very often wear the same shirt for a week on end. Jacquotte, however, was an indefatigable folder of linen, a born rubber and polisher of furniture, and a passionate lover of a perfectly religious and ceremonial cleanliness of the most scrupulous, the most radiant, and most fragrant kind. A sworn foe to dust, she swept and scoured and washed without ceasing.

The condition of the gateway caused her acute distress. On the first day of every month for the past ten years, she had extorted from her master a promise that he would replace the gate with a new one, that the walls of the house should be lime-washed, and that everything should be made

quite straight and proper about the place; but, so far, the master had not kept his word. So it happened that whenever she fell to lamenting over Benassis's deeply-rooted carelessness about things, she nearly always ended solemnly in these words, with which all her praises of her master usually terminated—"You cannot say that he is a fool, because he works such miracles, as you may say, in the place; but, all the same, he is a fool at times, such a fool that you have to do everything for him as if he were a child."

Jacquotte loved the house as if it had belonged to her; and when she had lived in it for twenty-two years, had she not some grounds for deluding herself on that head? After the curé's death the house had been for sale; and Benassis, who had only just come into the country, had bought it as it stood, with the walls about it and the ground belonging to it, together with the plate, wine, and furniture, the old sundial, the poultry, the horse, and the woman-servant. Jacquotte was the very pattern of a working housekeeper, with her clumsy figure, and her bodice, always of the same dark brown print with large red spots on it, which fitted her so tightly that it looked as if the material must give way if she moved at all. Her colorless face, with its double chin, looked out from under a round plaited cap, which made her look paler than she really was. She talked incessantly, and always in a loud voice—this short, active woman, with the plump, busy hands. Indeed, if Jacquotte was silent for a moment, and took a corner of her apron so as to turn it up in a triangle, it meant that a lengthy expostulation was about to be delivered for the benefit of master or man. Jacquotte was beyond all doubt the happiest cook in the kingdom; for, that nothing might be lacking in a measure of felicity as great as may be known in this world below, her vanity was continually gratified—the townspeople regarded her as an authority of an indefinite kind, and ranked her somewhere between the mayor and the park-keeper.

The master of the house found nobody in the kitchen when he entered it.

"Where the devil are they all gone?" he asked. "Pardon me for bringing you in this way," he went on, turning to Genestas. "The front entrance opens into the garden, but I am so little accustomed to receive visitors that—Jacquotte!" he called in rather peremptory tones.

A woman's voice answered to the name from the interior of the house. A moment later Jacquotte, assuming the offensive, called in her turn to Benassis, who forthwith went into the dining-room.

"Just like you, sir!" she exclaimed; "you never do like anybody else. You always ask people to dinner without telling me beforehand, and you think that everything is settled as soon as you have called for Jacquotte! You are not going to have the gentleman sit in the kitchen, are you? Is not the salon to be unlocked and a fire to be lighted? Nicole is there, and will see after everything. Now take the gentleman into the garden for a minute; that will amuse him; if he likes to look at pretty things, show him the arbor of hornbeam trees that the poor dear old gentleman made. I shall have time then to lay the cloth, and to get everything ready, the dinner and the salon too."

"Yes. But, Jacquotte," Benassis went on, "the gentleman is going to stay with us. Do not forget to give a look round M. Gravier's room, and see about the sheets and things, and—"

"Now you are not going to interfere about the sheets, are you?" asked Jacquotte. "If he is to sleep here, I know what must be done for him perfectly well. You have not so much as set foot in M. Gravier's room these ten months past. There is nothing to see there, the place is as clean as a new pin. Then will the gentleman make some stay here?" she continued in a milder tone.

"Yes."

"How long will he stay?"

"Faith, I do not know. What does it matter to you?"

"What does it matter to me, sir? Oh! very well, what

does it matter to me? Did any one ever hear the like! And the provisions and all that, and—"

At any other time she would have overwhelmed her master with reproaches for his breach of trust, but now she followed him into the kitchen before the torrent of words had come to an end. She had guessed that there was a prospect of a boarder, and was eager to see Genestas, to whom she made a very deferential courtesy, while she scanned him from head to foot. A thoughtful and dejected expression gave a harsh look to the soldier's face. In the dialogue between servant and master the latter had appeared to him in the light of a nonentity; and although he regretted the fact, this revelation had lessened the high opinion that he had formed of the man whose persistent efforts to save the district from the horrors of crétinism had won his admiration.

"I do not like the looks of that fellow at all!" said Jacquotte to herself.

"If you are not tired, sir," said the doctor to his supposed patient, "we will take a turn round the garden before dinner."

"Willingly," answered the commandant.

They went through the dining-room, and reached the garden by way of a sort of vestibule at the foot of the staircase between the salon and the dining-room. Beyond a great glass door at the further end of the vestibule lay a flight of stone steps which adorned the garden side of the house. The garden itself was divided into four large squares of equal size by two paths that intersected each other in the form of a cross, a box edging along their sides. At the further end there was a thick, green alley of hornbeam trees, which had been the joy and pride of the late owner. The soldier seated himself on a worm-eaten bench, and saw neither the trellis-work nor the espaliers, nor the vegetables of which Jacquotte took such great care. She followed the traditions of the epicurean churchman to whom this valuable garden owed its origin; but Benassis himself regarded it with sufficient indifference.

The commandant turned their talk from the trivial matters which had occupied them by saying to the doctor—"How comes it, sir, that the population of the valley has been trebled in ten years? There were seven hundred souls in it when you came, and to-day you say that they number more than two thousand."

"You are the first person who has put that question to me," the doctor answered. "Though it has been my aim to develop the capabilities of this little corner of the earth to the utmost, the constant pressure of a busy life has not left me time to think over the way in which (like the mendicant brother) I have made 'broth from a flint' on a large scale. M. Gravier himself, who is one of several who have done a great deal for us, and to whom I was able to render a service by re-establishing his health, has never given a thought to the theory, though he has been everywhere over our mountain sides with me, to see its practical results."

There was a moment's silence, during which Benassis followed his own thoughts, careless of the keen glance by which his guest tried to fathom him.

"You ask how it came about, my dear sir?" the doctor resumed. "It came about quite naturally through the working of the social law by which the need and means of supplying it are correlated. Herein lies the whole story. Races who have no wants are always poor. When I first came to live here in this township, there were about a hundred and thirty peasant families in it, and some two hundred hearths in the valley. The local authorities were such as might be expected in the prevailing wretchedness of the population. The mayor himself could not write, and the deputy-mayor was a small farmer, who lived beyond the limits of the commune. The justice of the peace was a poor devil who had nothing but his salary, and who was forced to relinquish the registration of births, marriages, and deaths to his clerk, another hapless wretch who was scarcely able to understand his duties. The old curé had died at the age of seventy, and his curate, a quite uneducated man, had just succeeded

to his position. These people comprised all the intelligence of the district over which they ruled.

"Those who dwelt amid these lovely natural surroundings grovelled in squalor and lived upon potatoes, milk, butter, and cheese. The only produce that brought in any money was the cheese, which most of them carried in small baskets to Grenoble or its outskirts. The richer or the more energetic among them sowed buckwheat for home consumption; sometimes they raised a crop of barley or oats, but wheat was unknown. The only trader in the place was the mayor, who owned a sawmill and bought up timber at a low price to sell again. In the absence of roads, his tree trunks had to be transported during the summer season; each log was dragged along one at a time, and with no small difficulty, by means of a chain attached to a halter about his horse's neck, and an iron hook at the further end of the chain, which was driven into the wood. Any one who went to Grenoble, whether on horseback or afoot, was obliged to follow a track high up on the mountain side, for the valley was quite impassable. The pretty road between this place and the first village that you reach as you come into the canton (the way along which you must have come) was nothing but a slough at all seasons of the year.

"Political events and revolutions had never reached this inaccessible country—it lay completely beyond the limits of social stir and change. Napoleon's name, and his alone, had penetrated hither; he is held in great veneration, thanks to one or two old soldiers who have returned to their native homes, and who of evenings tell marvellous tales about his adventures and his armies for the benefit of these simple folk. Their coming back is, moreover, a puzzle that no one can explain. Before I came here, the young men who went into the army all stayed in it for good. This fact in itself is a sufficient revelation of the wretched condition of the country. I need not give you a detailed description of it.

"This, then, was the state of things when I first came to the canton, which has several contented, well-tilled, and

fairly prosperous communes belonging to it upon the other side of the mountains. I will say nothing about the hovels in the town; they were neither more nor less than stables, in which men and animals were indiscriminately huddled together. As there was no inn in the place, I was obliged to ask the curate for a bed, he being in possession, for the time being, of this house, then offered for sale. Putting to him question after question, I came to have some slight knowledge of the lamentable condition of the country with the pleasant climate, the fertile soil, and the natural productiveness that had impressed me so much.

"At that time, sir, I was seeking to shape a future for myself that should be as little as possible like the troubled life that had left me weary; and one of those thoughts came into my mind that God gives to us at times, to enable us to take up our burdens and bear them. I resolved to develop all the resources of this country, just as a tutor develops the capacities of a child. Do not think too much of my benevolence; the pressing need that I felt for turning my thoughts into fresh channels entered too much into my motives. I had determined to give up the remainder of my life to some difficult task. A lifetime would be required to bring about the needful changes in a canton that Nature had made so wealthy, and man so poor; and I was tempted by the practical difficulties that stood in the way. As soon as I found that I could secure the curé's house and plenty of waste land at a small cost, I solemnly devoted myself to the calling of a country surgeon—the very last position that a man aspires to take. I determined to become the friend of the poor, and to expect no reward of any kind from them. Oh! I did not indulge in any illusions as to the nature of the country people, nor as to the hindrances that lie in the way of every attempt to bring about a better state of things among men or their surroundings. I have never made idyllic pictures of my people; I have taken them at their just worth—as poor peasants, neither wholly good nor wholly bad, whose constant toil never allows them to indulge in emotion, though

they can feel acutely at times. Above all things, in fact, I clearly understood that I should do nothing with them except through an appeal to their selfish interests, and by schemes for their immediate well-being. The peasants are one and all the sons of St. Thomas, the doubting apostle—they always like words to be supported by visible facts.

"Perhaps you will laugh at my first start, sir," the doctor went on after a pause. "I began my difficult enterprise by introducing the manufacture of baskets. The poor folk used to buy the wicker mats on which they drain their cheeses, and all the baskets needed for the insignificant trade of the district. I suggested to an intelligent young fellow that he might take on lease a good-sized piece of land by the side of the torrent. Every year the floods deposited a rich alluvial soil on this spot, where there should be no difficulty in growing osiers. I reckoned out the quantity of wicker-work of various kinds required from time to time by the canton, and went over to Grenoble, where I found out a young craftsman, a clever worker, but without any capital. When I had discovered him, I soon made up my mind to set him up in business here. I undertook to advance the money for the osiers required for his work until my osier-farmer should be in a position to supply him. I induced him to sell his baskets at rather lower prices than they asked for them in Grenoble, while, at the same time, they were better made. He entered into my views completely. The osier-beds and the basket-making were two business speculations whose results were only appreciated after the lapse of four years. Of course, you know that osiers must be three years old before they are fit to cut.

"At the commencement of operations, the basket-maker was boarded and lodged gratuitously. Before very long he married a woman from Saint Laurent du Pont, who had a little money. Then he had a house built, in a healthy and very airy situation which I chose, and my advice was followed as to the internal arrangements. Here was a triumph! I had created a new industry, and had brought a producer

and several workers into the town. I wonder if you will regard my elation as childish?

"For the first few days after my basket-maker had set up his business, I never went past his shop but my heart beat somewhat faster. And when I saw the newly-built house, with the green-painted shutters, the vine beside the doorway, and the bench and bundles of osiers before it; when I saw a tidy, neatly-dressed woman within it, nursing a plump, pink and white baby among the workmen, who were singing merrily and busily plaiting their wicker-work under the superintendence of a man who but lately had looked so pinched and pale, but now had an atmosphere of prosperity about him; when I saw all this, I confess that I could not forego the pleasure of turning basket-maker for a moment, of going into the shop to hear how things went with them, and of giving myself up to a feeling of content that I cannot express in words, for I had all their happiness as well as my own to make me glad. All my hopes became centred on this house, where the man dwelt who had been the first to put a steady faith in me. Like the basket-maker's wife, clasping her first nursling to her breast, did not I already fondly cherish the hopes of the future of this poor district?

"I had to do so many things at once," he went on, "I came into collision with other people's notions, and met with violent opposition, fomented by the ignorant mayor to whose office I had succeeded, and whose influence had dwindled away as mine increased. I determined to make him my deputy, and a confederate in my schemes of benevolence. Yes, in the first place, I endeavored to instil enlightened ideas into the densest of all heads. Through his self-love and cupidity I gained a hold upon my man. During six months, as we dined together, I took him deeply into my confidence about my projected improvements. Many people would think this intimacy one of the most painful inflictions in the course of my task; but was he not a tool of the most valuable kind? Woe to him who despises his axe, or flings it carelessly aside! Would it not have been very inconsist-

ent, moreover, if I, who wished to improve a district, had shrunk back at the thought of improving one man in it?

"A road was our first and most pressing need in bringing about a better state of things. If we could obtain permission from the Municipal Council to make a hard road, so as to put us in communication with the highway to Grenoble, the deputy-mayor would be the first gainer by it; for instead of dragging his timber over rough tracks at a great expense, a good road through the canton would enable him to transport it more easily, and to engage in a traffic on a large scale, in all kinds of wood, that would bring in money—not a miserable six hundred francs a year, but handsome sums which would mean a certain fortune for him some day. Convinced at last, he became my proselytizer.

"Through the whole of one winter the ex-mayor got into the way of explaining to our citizens that a good road for wheeled traffic would be a source of wealth to the whole country round, for it would enable every one to do a trade with Grenoble; he held forth on this head at the tavern while drinking with his intimates. When the Municipal Council had authorized the making of the road, I went to the prefect and obtained some money from the charitable funds at the disposal of the department, in order to pay for the hire of carts, for the commune was unable to undertake the transport of road metal for lack of wheeled conveyances. The ignorant began to murmur against me, and to say that I wanted to bring the days of the *corvée* back again; this made me anxious to finish this important work, that they might speedily appreciate its benefits. With this end in view, every Sunday during my first year of office I drew the whole population of the township, willing or unwilling, up on to the mountain, where I myself had traced out on a hard bottom the road between our village and the highway to Grenoble. Materials for making it were fortunately to be had in plenty all along the site.

"The tedious enterprise called for a great deal of patience on my part. Some who were ignorant of the law would

refuse at times to give their contribution of labor; others, again, who had not bread to eat, really could not afford to lose a day. Corn had to be distributed among these last, and the others must be soothed with friendly words. Yet by the time we had finished two-thirds of the road, which in all is about two leagues in length, the people had so thoroughly recognized its advantages that the remaining third was accomplished with a spirit that surprised me. I added to the future wealth of the commune by planting a double row of poplars along the ditch on either side of the way. The trees are already almost worth a fortune, and they make our road look like a king's highway. It is almost always dry, by reason of its position, and it was so well made that the annual cost of maintaining it is a bare two hundred francs. I must show it to you, for you cannot have seen it; you must have come by the picturesque way along the valley bottom, a road which the people decided to make for themselves three years later, so as to connect the various farms that were made there at that time. In three years ideas had rooted themselves in the common-sense of this township, hitherto so lacking in intelligence that a passing traveller would perhaps have thought it hopeless to attempt to instil them. But to continue.

"The establishment of the basket-maker was an example set before these poverty-stricken folk that they might profit by it. And if the road was to be a direct cause of the future wealth of the canton, all the primary forms of industry must be stimulated, or these two germs of a better state of things would come to nothing. My own work went forward by slow degrees, as I helped my osier farmer and wicker-worker and saw to the making of the road.

"I had two horses, and the timber merchant, the deputy-mayor, had three. He could only have them shod whenever he went over to Grenoble, so I induced a farrier to take up his abode here, and undertook to find him plenty of work. On the same day I met with a discharged soldier, who had nothing but his pension of a hundred francs, and was suffi-

ciently perplexed about his future. He could read and write, so I engaged him as secretary to the mayor; as it happened, I was lucky enough to find a wife for him, and his dreams of happiness were fulfilled.

"Both of these new families needed houses, as well as the basket-maker and twenty-two others from the crétin village; soon afterward twelve more households were established in the place. The workers in each of these families were at once producers and consumers. They were masons, carpenters, joiners, slaters, blacksmiths, and glaziers; and there was work enough to last them for a long time, for had they not their own houses to build when they had finished those for other people? Seventy, in fact, were built in the commune during my second year of office. One form of production demands another. The additions to the population of the township had created fresh wants, hitherto unknown among these dwellers in poverty. The wants gave rise to industries, and industries to trade, and the gains of trade raised the standard of comfort, which in its turn gave them practical ideas.

"The various workmen wished to buy their bread ready baked, so we came to have a baker. Buckwheat could no longer be the food of a population which, awakened from its lethargy, had become essentially active. They lived on buckwheat when I first came among them, and I wished to effect a change to rye, or a mixture of rye and wheat in the first instance, and finally to see a loaf of white bread even in the poorest household. Intellectual progress to my thinking was entirely dependent on a general improvement in the conditions of life. The presence of a butcher in a district says as much for its intelligence as for its wealth. The worker feeds himself, and a man who feeds himself thinks. I had made a very careful study of the soil, for I foresaw a time when it would be necessary to grow wheat. I was sure of launching the place in a very prosperous agricultural career, and of doubling the population, when once it had begun to work. And now the time had come.

"M. Gravier, of Grenoble, owned a great deal of land in the commune, which brought him in no rent, but which might be turned into corn-growing land. He is the head of a department in the Prefecture, as you know. It was a kindness for his own countryside quite as much as my earnest entreaties that won him over. He had very benevolently yielded to my importunities on former occasions, and I succeeded in making it clear to him that in so doing he had wrought unconsciously for his own benefit. After several days spent in pleadings, consultation, and talk, the matter was thrashed out. I undertook to guarantee him against all risks in the undertaking, from which his wife, a woman of no imagination, sought to frighten him. He agreed to build four farmhouses with a hundred acres of land attached to each, and promised to advance the sums required to pay for clearing the ground, for seeds, plowing gear, and cattle, and for making occupation roads.

"I myself also started two farms, quite as much for the sake of bringing my waste land into cultivation as with a view to giving an object-lesson in the use of modern methods in agriculture. In six weeks' time the population of the town increased to three hundred people. Homes for several families must be built on the six farms; there was a vast quantity of land to be broken up; the work called for laborers. Wheelwrights, drainmakers, journeymen, and laborers of all kinds flocked in. The road to Grenoble was covered with carts that came and went. All the countryside was astir. The circulation of money had made every one anxious to earn it, apathy had ceased, the place had awakened.

"The story of M. Gravier, one of those who did so much for this canton, can be concluded in a few words. In spite of cautious misgivings, not unnatural in a man occupying an official position in a provincial town, he advanced more than forty thousand francs, on the faith of my promises, without knowing whether he should ever see them back again. To-day every one of his farms is let for a thousand francs. His tenants have thriven so well that each

of them owns at least a hundred acres, three hundred sheep, twenty cows, ten oxen, and five horses, and employs more than twenty persons.

"But to resume. Our farms were ready by the end of the fourth year. Our wheat harvest seemed miraculous to the people in the district, heavy as the first crop off the land ought to be. How often during that year I trembled for the success of my work! Rain or drought might spoil everything by diminishing the belief in me that was already felt. When we began to grow wheat, it necessitated the mill that you have seen, which brings me in about five hundred francs a year. So the peasants say that 'there is luck about me' (that is the way they put it), and believe in me as they believe in their relics. These new undertakings—the farms, the mill, the plantations, and the roads—have given employment to all the various kinds of workers whom I had called in. Although the buildings fully represent the value of the sixty thousand francs of capital, which we sunk in the district, the outlay was more than returned to us by the profits on the sales which the consumers occasioned. I never ceased my efforts to put vigor into this industrial life which was just beginning. A nurseryman took my advice and came to settle in the place, and I preached wholesome doctrine to the poor concerning the planting of fruit trees, in order that some day they should obtain a monopoly of the sale of fruit in Grenoble.

" 'You take your cheeses there as it is,' I used to tell them, 'why not take poultry, eggs, vegetables, game, hay and straw, and so forth?' All my counsels were a source of fortune; it was a question of who should follow them first. A number of little businesses were started; they went on at first but slowly, but from day to day their progress became more rapid; and now sixty carts full of the various products of the district set out every Monday for Grenoble, and there is more buckwheat grown for poultry food than they used to sow for human consumption. The trade in timber grew to be so considerable that it was subdivided,

and since the fourth year of our industrial era we have had dealers in firewood, squared timber, planks, bark, and, later on, in charcoal. In the end four new sawmills were set up, to turn out the planks and beams of timber.

"When the ex-mayor had acquired a few business notions, he felt the necessity of learning to read and write. He compared the prices that were asked for wood in various neighborhoods, and found such differences in his favor that he secured new customers in one place after another, and now a third of the trade in the department passes through his hands. There has been such a sudden increase in our traffic that we find constant work for three wagon-builders and two harness-makers, each of them employing three hands at least. Lastly, the quantity of ironware that we use is so large that an agricultural implement and tool-maker has removed into the town, and is very well satisfied with the result.

"The desire of gain develops a spirit of ambition, which has ever since impelled our workers to extend their field from the township to the canton, and from the canton to the department, so as to increase their profits by increasing their sales. I had only to say a word to point out new openings to them, and their own sense did the rest. Four years had been sufficient to change the face of the township. When I had come through it first, I did not catch the slightest sound; but in less than five years from that time there was life and bustle everywhere. The gay songs, the shrill or murmuring sounds made by the tools in the workshops rang pleasantly in my ears. I watched the comings and goings of a busy population congregated in the clean and wholesome new town, where plenty of trees had been planted. Every one of them seemed conscious of a happy lot, every face shone with the content that comes through a life of useful toil.

"I look upon these five years as the first epoch of prosperity in the history of our town," the doctor went on after a pause. "During that time I had prepared the ground and sowed the seed in men's minds as well as in the land.

Henceforward industrial progress could not be stayed, the population was bound to go forward. A second epoch was about to begin. This little world very soon desired to be better clad. A shoemaker came, and with him a haberdasher, a tailor, and a hatter. This dawn of luxury brought us a butcher and a grocer, and a midwife, who became very necessary to me, for I lost a great deal of time over maternity cases. The stubbed wastes yielded excellent harvests, and the superior quality of our agricultural produce was maintained through the increased supply of manure. My enterprise could now develop itself; everything followed on quite naturally.

"When the houses had been rendered wholesome, and their inmates gradually persuaded to feed and clothe themselves better, I wanted the dumb animals to feel the benefit of these beginnings of civilization. All the excellence of cattle, whether as a race or as individuals, and, in consequence, the quality of the milk and meat, depends upon the care that is expended upon them. I took the sanitation of cowsheds for the text of my sermons. I showed them how an animal that is properly housed and well cared for is more profitable than a lean neglected beast, and the comparison wrought a gradual change for the better in the lot of the cattle in the commune. Not one of them was ill treated. The cows and oxen were rubbed down as in Switzerland and Auvergne. Sheepfolds, stables, byres, dairies, and barns were rebuilt after the pattern of the roomy, well-ventilated, and consequently healthy steadings that M. Gravier and I had constructed. Our tenants became my apostles. They made rapid converts of unbelievers, demonstrating the soundness of my doctrines by their prompt results. I loaned money to those who needed it, giving the preference to hardworking poor people, because they served as an example. Any unsound or sickly cattle or beasts of poor quality were quickly disposed of by my advice, and replaced by fine specimens. In this way our dairy produce came, in time, to command higher prices in the market than that sent by other com-

munes. We had splendid herds, and, as a consequence, capital leather.

"This step forward was of great importance, and in this wise. In rural economy nothing can be regarded as trifling. Our hides used to fetch scarcely anything, and the leather we made was of little value, but when once our leather and hides were improved, tanneries were easily established along the waterside. We became tanners, and business rapidly increased.

"Wine, properly speaking, had been hitherto unknown; a thin, sour beverage like verjuice had been their only drink, but now wineshops were established to supply a natural demand. The oldest tavern was enlarged and transformed into an inn, which furnished mules to pilgrims to the Grande Chartreuse, who began to come our way, and after two years there was enough business for two innkeepers.

"The justice of the peace died just as our second prosperous epoch began, and, luckily for us, his successor had formerly been a notary in Grenoble who had lost most of his fortune by a bad speculation, though enough of it yet remained to cause him to be looked upon in the village as a wealthy man. It was M. Gravier who induced him to settle among us. He built himself a comfortable house and helped me by uniting his efforts to mine. He also laid out a farm, and broke up and cleaned some of the waste land, and at this moment he has three chalets up above on the mountain side. He has a large family. He dismissed the old registrar and the clerk, and in their place installed better-educated men, who worked far harder, moreover, than their predecessors had done. One of the heads of these two new households started a distillery of potato-spirit, and the other was a wool-washer; each combined these occupations with their official work, and in this way two valuable industries were created among us.

"Now that the commune had some revenues of its own, no opposition was raised in any quarter when they were spent on building a town-hall, with a free school for elementary education in the building and accommodation for a teacher.

For this important post I had selected a poor priest who had taken the oath, and had therefore been cast out by the department, and who at last found a refuge among us for his old age. The schoolmistress is a very worthy woman who had lost all that she had, and was in great distress. We made up a nice little sum for her, and she has just opened a boarding-school for girls, to which the wealthy farmers hereabout are beginning to send their daughters.

"If so far, sir, I have been entitled to tell you the story of my own doings as the chronicle of this little spot of earth, I have reached the point when M. Janvier, the new parson, began to divide the work of regeneration with me. He has been a second Fénelon, unknown beyond the narrow limits of a country parish, and by some secret of his own has infused a spirit of brotherliness and of charity among these folk that has made them almost like one large family. M. Dufau, the justice of the peace, was a later comer, but he in an equal degree deserves the gratitude of the people here.

"I will put the whole position before you in figures that will make it clearer than any words of mine. At this moment the commune owns two hundred acres of woodland, and a hundred and sixty acres of meadow. Without running up the rates, we give a hundred crowns to supplement the curé's stipend, we pay two hundred francs to the rural policeman, and as much again to the schoolmaster and schoolmistress. The maintenance of the roads costs us five hundred francs, while necessary repairs to the town-hall, the parsonage, and the church, with some few other expenses, also amount to a similar sum. In fifteen years' time there will be a thousand francs' worth of wood to fell for every hundred francs' worth cut now, and the taxes will not cost the inhabitants a penny. This commune is bound to become one of the richest in France. But perhaps I am taxing your patience, sir?" said Benassis, suddenly discovering that his companion wore such a pensive expression that it seemed as though his attention was wandering.

"No! no!" answered the commandant.

"Our trade, handicrafts, and agriculture so far only supplied the needs of the district," the doctor went on. "At a certain point our prosperity came to a standstill. I wanted a post-office, and sellers of tobacco, stationery, powder and shot. The receiver of taxes had hitherto preferred to live elsewhere, but now I succeeded in persuading him to take up his abode in the town, holding out as inducements the pleasantness of the place and of the new society. As time and place permitted I had succeeded in producing a supply of everything for which I had first created a need, in attracting families of hard-working people into the district, and in implanting a desire to own land in them all. So by degrees, as they saved a little money, the waste land began to be broken up; spade husbandry and small holdings increased; so did the value of property on the mountain.

"Those struggling folk who, when I knew them first, used to walk over to Grenoble carrying their few cheeses for sale, now made the journey comfortably in a cart, and took fruit, eggs, chickens and turkeys, and before they were aware of it, every one was a little richer. Even those who came off worst had a garden at any rate, and grew early vegetables and fruit. It became the children's work to watch the cattle in the fields, and at last it was found to be a waste of time to bake bread at home. Here were signs of prosperity!

"But if this place was to be a permanent forge of industry, fuel must be constantly added to the fire. The town had not as yet a renascent industry which could maintain this commercial process, an industry which should make great transactions, a warehouse, and a market necessary. It is not enough that a country should lose none of the money that forms its capital; you will not increase its prosperity by more or less ingenious devices for causing this amount to circulate, by means of production and consumption, through the greatest possible number of hands. That is not where your problem lies. When a country is fully developed and its production keeps pace with its consumption, if private

wealth is to increase as well as the wealth of the community at large, there must be exchanges with other communities, which will keep a balance on the right side of the balance-sheet. This thought has led states with a limited territorial basis like Tyre, Carthage, Venice, Holland, and England, for instance, to secure the carrying trade. I cast about for some such notion as this to apply to our little world, so as to inaugurate a third commercial epoch. Our town is so much like any other that our prosperity was scarcely visible to a passing stranger; it was only for me that it was astonishing. The folk had come together by degrees; they themselves were a part of the change, and could not judge of its effects as a whole.

"Seven years had gone by when I met with two strangers, the real benefactors of the place, which perhaps some day they will transform into a large town. One of them is a Tyrolese, an exceedingly clever fellow, who makes rough shoes for country people's wear, and boots for people of fashion in Grenoble as no one can make them, not even in Paris itself. He was a poor strolling musician, who, singing and working, had made his way through Italy; one of those busy Germans who fashion the tools for their own work, and make the instrument that they play upon. When he came to the town he asked if any one wanted a pair of shoes. They sent him to me, and I gave him an order for two pairs of boots, for which he made his own lasts. The foreigner's skill surprised me. He gave accurate and consistent answers to the questions I put, and his face and manner confirmed the good opinion I had formed of him. I suggested that he should settle in the place, undertaking to assist him in business in every way that I could; in fact, I put a fairly large sum of money at his disposal. He accepted my offer. I had my own ideas in this. The quality of our leather had improved; and why should we not use it ourselves, and before very long make our own shoes at moderate prices?

"It was the basket-maker's business over again on a larger scale. Chance had put an exceedingly clever hard-working

man in my way, and he must be retained so that a steady and profitable trade might be given to the place. There is a constant demand for footgear, and a very slight difference in price is felt at once by the purchaser.

"This was my reasoning, sir, and fortunately events have justified it. At this time we have five tanyards, each of which has its bark-mill. They take all the hides produced in the department itself, and even draw part of their supply from Provence; and yet the Tyrolese uses more leather than they can produce, and has forty workpeople in his employ!

"I happened on the other man after a fashion no whit less strange, but you might find the story tedious. He is just an ordinary peasant, who discovered a cheaper way of making the great broad-brimmed hats that are worn in this part of the world. He sells them in other cantons, and even sends them into Switzerland and Savoy. So long as the quality and the low prices can be maintained, here are two inexhaustible sources of wealth for the canton, which suggested to my mind the idea of establishing three fairs in the year. The prefect, amazed at our industrial progress, lent his aid in obtaining the royal ordinance which authorized them, and last year we held our three fairs. They are known as far as Savoy as the Shoe Fair and the Hat Fair.

"The head clerk of a notary in Grenoble heard of these changes. He was poor, but he is a well-educated, hard-working young fellow, and Mlle. Gravier was engaged to be married to him. He went to Paris to ask for an authorization to establish himself here as a notary, and his request was granted. As he had not had to pay for his appointment, he could afford to build a house in the market square of the new town, opposite the house of the justice of the peace. We have a market once a week, and a considerable amount of business is transacted in corn and cattle.

"Next year a druggist surely ought to come among us, and next we want a clockmaker, a furniture dealer, and a bookseller; and so, by degrees, we shall have all the desirable luxuries of life. Who knows but that at last we shall

have a number of substantial houses, and give ourselves all the airs of a small city? Education has made such strides that there has never been any opposition made at the council-board when I proposed that we should restore our church and build a parsonage; nor when I brought forward a plan for laying out a fine open space, planted with trees, where the fairs could be held, and a further scheme for a survey of the township, so that its future streets should be wholesome, spacious, and wisely planned.

"This is how we came to have nineteen hundred hearths in the place of a hundred and thirty-seven; three thousand head of cattle instead of eight hundred; and for a population of seven hundred, no less than two thousand persons are living in the township, or three thousand, if the people down the valley are included. There are twelve houses belonging to wealthy people in the commune, there are a hundred well-to-do families, and two hundred more which are thriving. The rest have their own exertions to look to. Every one knows how to read and write, and we subscribe to seventeen different newspapers.

"We have poor people still among us—there are far too many of them, in fact; but we have no beggars, and there is work enough for all. I have so many patients that my daily round taxes the powers of two horses. I can go anywhere for five miles round at any hour without fear; for if any one was minded to fire a shot at me, his life would not be worth ten minutes' purchase. The undemonstrative affection of the people is my sole gain from all these changes, except the radiant 'Good-day, M. Benassis,' that every one gives me as I pass. You will understand, of course, that the wealth incidentally acquired through my model farms has only been a means and not an end."

"If every one followed your example in other places, sir, France would be great indeed, and might laugh at the rest of Europe!" cried Genestas enthusiastically.

"But I have kept you out here for half an hour," said Benassis; "it is growing dark, let us go in to dinner."

The doctor's house, on the side facing the garden, consists of a ground floor and a single story, with a row of five windows in each; dormer windows also project from the tiled mansard-roof. The green-painted shutters are in startling contrast with the gray tones of the walls. A vine wanders along the whole side of the house, a pleasant strip of green like a frieze, between the two stories. A few struggling Bengal roses make shift to live as best they may, half drowned at times by the drippings from the gutterless eaves.

As you enter the large vestibule, the salon lies to your right; it contains four windows, two of which look into the yard, and two into the garden. Ceiling and wainscot are panelled, and the walls are hung with seventeenth century tapestry—pathetic evidence that the room had been the object of the late owner's aspiration, and that he had lavished all that he could spare upon it. The great roomy armchairs, covered with brocaded damask; the old-fashioned, gilded candle-sconces above the chimney-piece, and the window curtains with their heavy tassels, showed that the curé had been a wealthy man. Benassis had made some additions to this furniture, which was not without a character of its own. He had placed two smaller tables, decorated with carved wooden garlands, between the windows on opposite sides of the room, and had put a clock, in a case of tortoise-shell, inlaid with copper, upon the mantel-shelf. The doctor seldom occupied the salon; its atmosphere was damp and close, like that of a room that is always kept shut. Memories of the dead curé still lingered about it; the peculiar scent of his tobacco seemed to pervade the corner by the hearth where he had been wont to sit. The two great easy-chairs were symmetrically arranged on either side of the fire, which had not been lighted since the time of M. Gravier's visit; the bright flames from the pine logs lighted the room.

"The evenings are chilly even now," said Benassis; "it is pleasant to see a fire."

Genestas was meditating. He was beginning to understand the doctor's indifference to his every-day surroundings.

"It is surprising to me, sir, that you, who possess real public spirit, should have made no effort to enlighten the Government, after accomplishing so much."

Benassis began to laugh, but without bitterness; he said, rather sadly—"You mean that I should draw up some sort of memorial on various ways of civilizing France? You are not the first to suggest it, sir; M. Gravier has forestalled you. Unluckily, Governments cannot be enlightened, and a Government which regards itself as a diffuser of light is the least open to enlightenment. What we have done for our canton, every mayor ought, of course, to do for his; the magistrate should work for his town, the sub-prefect for his district, the prefect for the department, and the minister for France, each acting in his own sphere of interest. For the few miles of country road that I persuaded our people to make, another would succeed in constructing a canal or a highway; and for my encouragement of the peasants' trade in hats, a minister would emancipate France from the industrial yoke of the foreigner by encouraging the manufacture of clocks in different places, by helping to bring to perfection our iron and steel, our tools and appliances, or by bringing silk or dyer's woad into cultivation.

"In commerce, 'encouragement' does not mean protection. A really wise policy should aim at making a country independent of foreign supply, but this should be effected without resorting to the pitiful shifts of customs duties and prohibitions. Industries must work out their own salvation, competition is the life of trade. A protected industry goes to sleep, and monopoly, like the protective tariff, kills it outright. The country upon which all others depend for their supplies will be the land which will promulgate free trade, for it will be conscious of its power to produce its manufactures at prices lower than those of any of its competitors. France is in a better position to attain this end than England, for France alone possesses an amount of territory sufficiently extensive to maintain a supply of agricultural produce at prices that will enable the worker to live on low wages; the

Administration should keep this end in view, for therein lies the whole modern question. I have not devoted my life to this study, dear sir; I found my work by accident, and late in the day. Such simple things as these are too slight, moreover, to build into a system; there is nothing wonderful about them, they do not lend themselves to theories; it is their misfortune to be merely practically useful. And then work cannot be done quickly. The man who means to succeed in these ways must daily look to find within himself the stock of courage needed for the day, a courage in reality of the rarest kind, though it does not seem hard to practice, and meets with little recognition—the courage of the schoolmaster, who must say the same things over and over again. We all honor the man who has shed his blood on the battlefield, as you have done; but we ridicule this other whose life-fire is slowly consumed in repeating the same words to children of the same age. There is no attraction for any of us in obscure well-doing. We know nothing of the civic virtue that led the great men of ancient times to serve their country in the lowest rank whenever they did not command. Our age is afflicted with a disease that makes each of us seek to rise above his fellows, and there are more saints than shrines among us.

"This is how it has come to pass. The monarchy fell, and we lost Honor, Christian Virtue faded with the religion of our forefathers, and our own ineffectual attempts at government have destroyed Patriotism. Ideas can never utterly perish, so these beliefs linger on in our midst, but they do not influence the great mass of the people, and Society has no support but Egoism. Every individual believes in himself. For us the future means egoism; further than that we cannot see. The great man who shall save us from the shipwreck which is imminent will no doubt avail himself of individualism when he makes a nation of us once more; but until this regeneration comes we bide our time in a materialistic and utilitarian age. Utilitarianism—to this conclusion have we come. We are all rated, not at our just worth, but

according to our social importance. People will scarcely look at an energetic man if he is in shirt-sleeves. The Government itself is pervaded by this idea. A minister sends a paltry medal to a sailor who has saved a dozen lives at the risk of his own, while the deputy who sells his vote to those in power receives the Cross of the Legion of Honor.

"Woe to a people made up of such men as these! For nations, like men, owe all the strength and vitality that is in them to noble thoughts and aspirations, and men's feelings shape their faith. But when self-interest has taken the place of faith, and each one of us thinks only of himself, and believes in himself alone, how can you expect to find among us much of that civil courage whose very essence consists in self-renunciation? The same principle underlies both military and civil courage, although you soldiers are called upon to yield your lives up once and for all, while ours are given slowly drop by drop, and the battle is the same for both, although it takes different forms.

"The man who would fain civilize the lowliest spot on earth needs something besides wealth for the task. Knowledge is still more necessary; and knowledge, and patriotism, and integrity are worthless unless they are accompanied by a firm determination on his part to set his own personal interests completely aside, and to devote himself to a social idea. France, no doubt, possesses more than one well-educated man and more than one patriot in every commune; but I am fully persuaded that not every canton can produce a man who to these valuable qualifications unites the unflagging will and pertinacity with which a blacksmith hammers out iron.

"The Destroyer and the Builder are two manifestations of Will: the one prepares the way, and the other accomplishes the work; the first appears in the guise of a spirit of evil, and the second seems like the spirit of good. Glory falls to the Destroyer, while the Builder is forgotten; for evil makes a noise in the world that rouses little souls to admiration, while good deeds are slow to make themselves heard. Self-love leads us to prefer the more conspicuous

part. If it should happen that any public work is undertaken without an interested motive, it will only be by accident, until the day when education has changed our ways of regarding things in France.

"Yet suppose that this change had come to pass, and that all of us were public-spirited citizens; in spite of our comfortable lives among trivialities, should we not be in a fair way to become the most wearied, wearisome, and unfortunate race of philistines under the sun?

"I am not at the helm of State, the decision of great questions of this kind is not within my province; but, setting these considerations aside, there are other difficulties in the way of laying down hard and fast rules as to government. In the matter of civilization, everything is relative. Ideas that suit one country admirably are fatal in another—men's minds are as various as the soils of the globe. If we have so often been ill-governed, it is because a faculty for government, like taste, is the outcome of a very rare and lofty attitude of mind. The qualifications for the work are found in a natural bent of the soul rather than in the possession of scientific formulæ. No one need fear, however, to call himself a statesman, for his actions and motives cannot be justly estimated; his real judges are far away, and the results of his deeds are even more remote. We have a great respect here in France for men of ideas—a keen intellect exerts a great attraction for us; but ideas are of little value where a resolute will is the one thing needful. Administration, as a matter of fact, does not consist in forcing more or less wise methods and ideas upon the great mass of the nation, but in giving to the ideas, good or bad, that they already possess a practical turn which will make them conduce to the general welfare of the State. If old-established prejudices and customs bring a country into a bad way, the people will renounce their errors of their own accord. Are not losses the result of economical errors of every kind? And is it not, therefore, to every one's interest to rectify them in the long-run?

"Luckily I found a *tabula rasa* in this district. They have followed my advice, and the land is well cultivated; but there had been no previous errors in agriculture, and the soil was good to begin with, so that it has been easy to introduce the five-ply shift, artificial grasses, and potatoes. My methods did not clash with people's prejudices. The faultily constructed plowshares in use in some parts of France were unknown here, the hoe sufficed for the little field work that they did. Our wheelwright extolled my wheeled plows because he wished to increase his own business, so I secured an ally in him; but in this matter, as in all others, I sought to make the good of one conduce to the good of all.

"Then I turned my attention to another kind of production, that should increase the welfare rather than the wealth of these poor folk. I have brought nothing from without into this district; I have simply encouraged the people to seek beyond its limits for a market for their produce, a measure that could not but increase their prosperity in a way that they felt immediately. They had no idea of the fact, but they themselves were my apostles, and their works preached my doctrines. Something else must also be borne in mind. We are barely five leagues from Grenoble. There is plenty of demand in a large city for produce of all kinds, but not every commune is situated at the gates of a city. In every similar undertaking the nature, situation, and resources of the country must be taken into consideration, and a careful study must be made of the soil, of the people themselves, and of many other things; and no one should expect to have vines grow in Normandy. So no tasks can be more various than those of government, and its general principles must be few in number. The law is uniform, but not so the land and the minds and customs of those who dwell in it; and the administration of the law is the art of carrying it out in such a manner that no injury is done to people's interests. Every place must be considered separately.

"On the other side of the mountain at the foot of which

our deserted village lies, they find it impossible to use wheeled plows, because the soil is not deep enough. Now, if the mayor of the commune were to take it into his head to follow in our footsteps, he would be the ruin of his neighborhood. I advised him to plant vineyards; they had a capital vintage last year in the little district, and their wine is exchanged for our corn.

"Then, lastly, it must be remembered that my words carried a certain weight with the people to whom I preached, and that we were continually brought into close contact. I cured my peasants' complaints; an easy task, for a nourishing diet is, as a rule, all that is needed to restore them to health and strength. Either through thrift, or through sheer poverty, the country people starve themselves; any illness among them is caused in this way, and as a rule they enjoy very fair health.

"When I first decided to devote myself to this life of obscure renunciation, I was in doubt for a long while whether to become a curé, a country doctor, or a justice of the peace. It is not without reason that people speak collectively of the priest, the lawyer, and the doctor as 'men of the black robe' —so the saying goes. The first heals the wounds of the soul, the second those of the purse, and the third those of the body. They represent the three principal elements necessary to the existence of society—conscience, property, and health. At one time the first, and at a later period the second, was all-important in the State. Our predecessors on this earth thought, perhaps not without reason, that the priest, who prescribed what men should think, ought to be paramount; so the priest was king, pontiff, and judge in one, for in those days belief and faith were everything. All this has been changed in our day; and we must even take our epoch as we find it. But I, for one, believe that the progress of civilization and the welfare of the people depend on these three men. They are the three powers who bring home to the people's minds the ways in which facts, interests, and principles affect them. They themselves are three great re-

sults produced in the midst of the nation by the operation of events, by the ownership of property, and by the growth of ideas. Time goes on and brings changes to pass, property increases or diminishes in men's hands, all the various readjustments have to be duly regulated, and in this way principles of social order are established. If civilization is to spread itself, and production is to be increased, the people must be made to understand the way in which the interests of the individual harmonize with national interests which resolve themselves into facts, interests, and principles. As these three professions are bound to deal with these issues of human life, it seemed to me that they must be the most powerful civilizing agencies of our time. They alone afford to a man of wealth the opportunity of mitigating the fate of the poor, with whom they daily bring him in contact.

"The peasant is always more willing to listen to the man who lays down rules for saving him from bodily ills than to the priest who exhorts him to save his soul. The first speaker can talk of this earth, the scene of the peasant's labors, while the priest is bound to talk to him of heaven, with which, unfortunately, the peasant nowadays concerns himself very little indeed; I say unfortunately, because the doctrine of a future life is not only a consolation, but a means by which men may be governed. Is not religion the one power that sanctions social laws? We have but lately vindicated the existence of God. In the absence of a religion, the Government was driven to invent the Terror, in order to carry its laws into effect; but the terror was the fear of man, and it has passed away.

"When a peasant is ill, when he is forced to lie on his pallet, and while he is recovering, he cannot help himself, he is forced to listen to logical reasoning, which he can understand quite well if it is put clearly before him. This thought made a doctor of me. My calculations for the peasants were made along with them. I never gave advice unless I was quite sure of the results, and in this way compelled them to admit the wisdom of my views. The people

require infallibility. Infallibility was the making of Napoleon; he would have been a god if he had not filled the world with the sound of his fall at Waterloo. If Mahomet founded a permanent religion after conquering the third part of the globe, it was by dint of concealing his deathbed from the crowd. The same rules hold good for the great conqueror and for the provincial mayor, and a nation or a commune is much the same sort of crowd; indeed, the great multitude of mankind is the same everywhere.

"I have been exceedingly firm with those whom I have helped with money; if I had not been inflexible on this point, they all would have laughed at me. Peasants, no less than worldlings, end by despising the man that they can deceive. He has been cheated? Clearly, then, he must have been weak; and it is might alone that governs the world. I have never charged a penny for my professional advice, except to those who were evidently rich people; but I have not allowed the value of my services to be overlooked at all, and I always make them pay for medicine unless the patient is exceedingly poor. If my peasants do not pay me in money, they are quite aware that they are in my debt; sometimes they satisfy their consciences by bringing oats for my horses, or corn, when it is cheap. But if the miller were to send me some eels as a return for my advice, I should tell him that he is too generous for such a small matter. My politeness bears fruit. In the winter I shall have some sacks of flour for the poor. Ah! sir, they have kind hearts, these people, if one does not slight them, and to-day I think more good and less evil of them than I did formerly."

"What a deal of trouble you have taken!" said Genestas.

"Not at all," answered Benassis. "It was no more trouble to say something useful than to chatter about trifles; and whether I chatted or joked, the talk always turned on them and their concerns wherever I went. They would not listen to me at first. I had to overcome their dislikes; I belonged to the middle classes—that is to say, I was a natural enemy.

I found the struggle amusing. An easy or an uneasy conscience—that is all the difference that lies between doing well or ill; the trouble is the same in either case. If scoundrels would but behave themselves properly, they might be millionnaires instead of being hanged. That is all."

"The dinner is growing cold, sir!" cried Jacquotte, in the doorway.

Genestas caught the doctor's arm.

"I have only one comment to offer on what I have just heard," he remarked. "I am not acquainted with any account of the wars of Mahomet, so that I can form no opinions as to his military talents; but if you had only watched the Emperor's tactics during the campaign in France, you might well have taken him for a god; and if he was beaten on the field of Waterloo, it was because he was more than mortal, it was because the earth found his weight too heavy to bear, and sprang from under his feet! On every other subject I entirely agree with you, and *tonnerre de Dieu!* whoever hatched you did a good day's work."

"Come," exclaimed Benassis with a smile, "let us sit down to dinner."

The walls of the dining-room were panelled from floor to ceiling, and painted gray. The furniture consisted of a few straw-bottomed chairs, a sideboard, some cupboards, a stove, and the late owner's celebrated clock; there were white curtains in the window, and a white cloth on the table, about which there was no sign of luxury. The dinner service was of plain white earthenware; the soup, made after the traditions of the late curé, was the most concentrated kind of broth that was ever set to simmer by any mortal cook. The doctor and his guest had scarcely finished it when a man rushed into the kitchen, and in spite of Jacquotte suddenly invaded the dining-room.

"Well, what is it?" asked the doctor.

"It is this, sir. The mistress, our Mme. Vigneau, has turned as white as white can be, so that we are frightened about her."

"Oh, well, then," Benassis said cheerfully, "I must leave the table," and he rose to go.

In spite of the doctor's entreaties, Genestas flung down his table-napkin, and swore in soldierly fashion that he would not finish his dinner without his host. He returned indeed to the salon; and as he warmed himself by the fire, he thought over the troubles that no man may escape, the troubles that are found in every lot that it falls to man to endure here upon earth.

Benassis soon came back, and the two future friends sat down again.

"Taboureau has just come up to speak to you," said Jacquotte to her master, as she brought in the dishes that she had kept hot for them.

"Who can be ill at his place?" asked the doctor.

"No one is ill, sir. I think from what he said that it is some matter of his own that he wants to ask you about; he is coming back again."

"Very good. This Taboureau," Benassis went on, addressing Genestas, "is for me a whole philosophical treatise; take a good look at him when he comes, he is sure to amuse you. He was a laborer, a thrifty hard-working man, eating little and getting through a great deal of work. As soon as the rogue came to have a few crowns of his own, his intelligence began to develop; he watched the progress which I had originated in this little district with an eye to his own profit. He has made quite a fortune in eight years' time; that is to say, a fortune for our part of the world. Very likely he may have a couple of score thousand francs by now. But if I were to give you a thousand guesses, you would never find out how he made the money. He is a usurer, and his scheme of usury is so profoundly and so cleverly based upon the requirements of the whole canton, that I should merely waste my time if I were to take it upon myself to undeceive them as to the benefits which they reap, in their own opinion, from their dealings with Taboureau. When this devil of a fellow saw every one cultivating his

own plot of ground, he hurried about buying grain so as to supply the poor with the requisite seed. Here, as everywhere else, the peasants and even some of the farmers had no ready money with which to pay for seed. To some, Master Taboureau would loan a sack of barley, for which he was to receive a sack of rye at harvest time, and to others a measure of wheat for a sack of flour. At the present day the man has extended this curious business of his all over the department; and unless something happens to prevent him, he will go on and very likely make a million. Well, my dear sir, Taboureau the laborer, an obliging, hard-working, good-natured fellow used to lend a helping hand to any one who asked him; but as his gains have increased *Monsieur* Taboureau has become litigious, arrogant, and somewhat given to sharp practice. The more money he makes, the worse he grows. The moment that the peasant forsakes his life of toil pure and simple for the leisured existence of the landowning classes, he becomes intolerable. There is a certain kind of character, partly virtuous, partly vicious, half-educated, half-ignorant, which will always be the despair of governments. You will see an example of it in Taboureau. He looks simple, and even doltish; but when his interests are in question, he is certainly profoundly clever."

A heavy footstep announced the approach of the grain lender.

"Come in, Taboureau!" cried Benassis.

Thus forewarned by the doctor, the commandant scrutinized the peasant in the doorway. Taboureau was decidedly thin, and stooped a little. He had a bulging forehead, covered with wrinkles, and a cavernous face, in which two small gray eyes with a dark spot in either of them seemed to be pierced rather than set. The lines of the miser's mouth were close and firm, and his narrow chin turned up to meet an exaggeratedly hooked nose. His hair was turning gray already, and deep furrows which converged above the prominent cheekbones spoke of the wily shrewdness of a horse-dealer and of a life spent in journeying about.

He wore a blue coat in fairly clean condition, the square side-pocket flaps stuck out above his hips, and the skirts of the coat hung loose in front, so that a white-flowered waistcoat was visible. There he stood firmly planted on both feet, leaning upon a thick stick with a knob at the end of it. A little spaniel had followed the grain-dealer, in spite of Jacquotte's efforts, and was crouching beside him.

"Well, what is it?" Benassis asked as he turned to this being.

Taboureau gave a suspicious glance at the stranger seated at the doctor's table, and said—"It is not a case of illness, *M. le Maire*, but you understand how to doctor the ailments of the purse just as well as those of the body. We have had a little difficulty with a man over at Saint Laurent, and I have come to ask your advice about it."

"Why not see the justice of the peace or his clerk?"

"Oh, because you are so much cleverer, sir, and I shall feel more sure about my case if I can have your countenance."

"My good Taboureau, I am willing to give medical advice to the poor without charging for it; but I cannot look into the lawsuits of a man who is as wealthy as you are for nothing. It costs a good deal to acquire that kind of knowledge."

Taboureau began to twist his hat about.

"If you want my advice, in order to save the hard coin you would have to pay to the lawyer folk over in Grenoble, you must send a bag of rye to the widow Martin, the woman who is bringing up the charity children."

"*Dame!* I will do it with all my heart, sir, if you think it necessary. Can I talk about this business of mine without troubling the gentleman there?" he added, with a look at Genestas.

The doctor nodded, so Taboureau went on.

"Well, then, sir, two months ago a man from Saint Laurent came over here to find me. 'Taboureau,' said he to me, 'could you sell me a hundred and thirty-seven measures of

barley?' 'Why not?' say I, 'that is my trade. Do you want it immediately?' 'No,' he says, 'I want it for the beginning of spring, in March.' So far, so good. Well, we drive our bargain, and we drink a glass, and we agree that he is to pay me the price that barley fetched at Grenoble last market day, and I am to deliver it in March. I am to warehouse it at owner's risk, and no allowance for shrinkage of course. But barley goes up and up, my dear sir; the barley rises like boiling milk. Then I am hard up for money, and I sell my barley. Quite natural, sir, was it not?"

"No," said Benassis, "the barley had passed out of your possession, you were only warehousing it. And suppose the barley had gone down in value, would you not have compelled your buyer to take it at the price you agreed upon?"

"But very likely he would not have paid me, sir. One must look out for one's self! The seller ought to make a profit when the chance comes in his way; and, after all, the goods are not yours until you have paid for them. That is so, *Monsieur l' Officier*, is it not? For you can see that the gentleman has been in the army."

"Taboureau," Benassis said sternly, "ill luck will come to you. Sooner or later God punishes ill deeds. How can you, knowing as much as you do, a capable man moreover, and a man who conducts his business honorably, set examples of dishonesty to the canton? If you allow such proceedings as this to be taken against you, how can you expect that the poor will remain honest people and will not rob you? Your laborers will cheat you out of part of their working hours, and every one here will be demoralized. You are in the wrong. Your barley was as good as delivered. If the man from Saint Laurent had fetched it himself, you would not have gone there to take it away from him; you have sold something that was no longer yours to sell, for your barley had already been turned into money which was to be paid down at the stipulated time. But go on."

Genestas gave the doctor a significant glance, to call his attention to Taboureau's impassive countenance. Not a

muscle had stirred in the usurer's face during this reprimand; there was no flush on his forehead, and no sign of emotion in his little eyes.

"Well, sir, I am called upon to supply the barley at last winter's price. Now *I* consider that I am not bound to do so."

"Look here, Taboureau, deliver that barley and be very quick about it, or make up your mind to be respected by nobody in future. Even if you gained the day in a case like this, you would be looked upon as an unscrupulous man who does not keep to his word, and is not bound by promises, or by honor, or—"

"Go on, there is nothing to be afraid of; tell me that I am a scamp, a scoundrel, a thief outright. You can say things like that in business without insulting anybody, M. le Maire. 'Tis each for himself in business, you know."

"Well, then, why deliberately put yourself in a position in which you deserve to be called by such names?"

"But if the law is on my side, sir?"

"But the law will certainly *not* be on your side."

"Are you quite sure about it, sir? Certain sure? For you see it is an important matter."

"Certainly I am. Quite sure. If I were not at dinner, I would have down the Code, and you should see for yourself. If the case comes on, you will lose it, and you will never set foot in my house again, for I do not wish to receive people whom I do not respect. Do you understand? You will lose your case."

"Oh! no, not at all, I shall not lose it, sir," said Taboureau. "You see, sir, it is this way; it is the man from Saint Laurent who owes *me* the barley; I bought it of him, and now he refuses to deliver it. I just wanted to make quite certain that I should gain my case before going to any expense at the court about it."

Genestas and the doctor exchanged glances; each concealed his amazement at the ingenious device by which the man had sought to learn the truth about this point of law.

"Very well, Taboureau, your man is a swindler; you should not make bargains with such people."

"Ah! sir, they understand business, those people do."

"Good-by, Taboureau."

"Your servant, gentlemen."

"Well, now," remarked Benassis, when the usurer had gone, "if that fellow were in Paris, do you not think that he would be a millionnaire before very long?"

After dinner, the doctor and his visitor went back to the salon, and all the rest of the evening until bedtime they talked about war and politics; Genestas evincing a most violent dislike of the English in the course of conversation.

"May I know whom I have the honor of entertaining as a guest?" asked the doctor.

"My name is Pierre Bluteau," answered Genestas; "I am a captain stationed at Grenoble."

"Very well, sir. Do you care to adopt M. Gravier's plan? In the morning after breakfast he liked to go on my rounds with me. I am not at all sure that you will find anything to interest you in the things that occupy me—they are so very commonplace. For, after all, you own no land about here, nor are you the mayor of the place, and you will see nothing in the canton that you cannot see elsewhere; one thatched cottage is just like another. Still you will be in the open air, and you will have something to take you out of doors."

"No proposal could give me more pleasure. I did not venture to make it myself, lest I should thrust myself upon you."

Commandant Genestas (who shall keep his own name in spite of the fictitious appellation which he had thought fit to give himself) followed his host to a room on the first floor above the salon.

"That is right," said Benassis, "Jacquotte has lighted a fire for you. If you want anything, there is a bell-pull, close to the head of the bed."

"I am not likely to want anything, however small, it

seems to me," exclaimed Genestas. "There is even a bootjack. Only an old trooper knows what a bootjack is worth! There are times, when one is out on a campaign, sir, when one is ready to burn down a house to come by a knave of a bootjack. After a few marches, one on the top of another, or above all, after an engagement, there are times when a swollen foot and the soaked leather will not part company, pull as you will; I have had to lie down in my boots more than once. One can put up with the annoyance so long as one is by one's self."

The commandant's wink gave a kind of profound slyness to his last utterance; then he began to make a survey. Not without surprise, he saw that the room was neatly kept, comfortable, and almost luxurious.

"What splendor!" was his comment. "Your own room must be something wonderful."

"Come and see," said the doctor; "I am your neighbor, there is nothing but the staircase between us."

Genestas was again surprised when he entered the doctor's room, a bare-looking apartment with no adornment on the walls save an old-fashioned wall paper of a yellowish tint with a pattern of brown roses over it; the color had gone in patches here and there. There was a roughly painted iron bedstead, two gray cotton curtains were suspended from a wooden bracket above it, and a threadbare strip of carpet lay at the foot; it was like a bed in a hospital. By the bed-head stood a rickety cupboard on four feet with a door that continually rattled with a sound like castanets.

Three chairs and a couple of straw-bottomed armchairs stood about the room, and on a low chest of drawers in wal nut wood stood a basin, and a ewer of obsolete pattern with a lid, which was kept in place by a leaden rim round the top of the vessel. This completed the list of the furniture.

The grate was empty. All the apparatus required for shaving lay about in front of an old mirror suspended above the painted stone chimney-piece by a bit of string. The floor was clean and carefully swept, but it was worn and splintered

in various places, and there were hollows in it here and there. Gray cotton curtains bordered with a green fringe adorned the two windows. The scrupulous cleanliness maintained by Jacquotte gave a certain air of distinction to this picture of simplicity, but everything in it, down to the round table littered with stray papers, and the very pens on the writing desk, gave the idea of an almost monastic life—a life so wholly filled with thought and feeling of a wider kind that outward surroundings had come to be matters of no moment. An open door allowed the commandant to see a smaller room, which doubtless the doctor seldom occupied. It was scarcely kept in the same condition as the adjoining apartment; a few dusty books lay strewn about over the no less dusty shelves, and from the rows of labelled bottles it was easy to guess that the place was devoted rather to the dispensing of drugs than to scientific studies.

"Why this difference between your room and mine, you will ask?" said Benassis. "Listen a moment. I have always blushed for those who put their guests in the attics, who furnish them with mirrors that distort everything to such a degree that any one beholding himself might think that he was smaller or larger than nature made him, or suffering from an apoplectic stroke or some other bad complaint. Ought we not to do our utmost to make a room as pleasant as possible during the time that our friend can be with us? Hospitality, to my thinking, is a virtue, a pleasure, and a luxury; but in whatever light it is considered, nay, even if you regard it as a speculation, ought not our guest or our friend to be made much of? Ought not every refinement of luxury to be reserved for him?

"So the best furniture is put into your room, where a thick carpet is laid down; there are hangings on the walls, and a clock and wax candles; and for you Jacquotte will do her best; she has no doubt brought a night-light, and a pair of new slippers and some milk, and her warming-pan too for your benefit. I hope that you will find that luxurious armchair the most comfortable seat you have ever sat in, it was

a discovery of the late curé's; I do not know where he found it, but it is a fact that if you wish to meet with the perfection of comfort, beauty, or convenience, you must ask counsel of the Church. Well, I hope that you will find everything in your room to your liking. You will find some good razors and excellent soap, and all the trifling details that make one's own home so pleasant. And if my views on the subject of hospitality should not at once explain the difference between your room and mine, to-morrow, M. Bluteau, you will arrive at a wonderfully clear comprehension of the bareness of my room and the untidy condition of my study, when you see all the continual comings and goings here. Mine is not an indoor life, to begin with. I am almost always out of the house, and if I stay at home, peasants come in at every moment to speak to me. My body and soul and house are all theirs. Why should I worry about social conventions in these matters, or trouble myself over the damage unintentionally done to floors and furniture by these worthy folk? Such things cannot be helped. Luxury properly belongs to the boudoir and the guest-chamber, to great houses and chateaux. In short, as I scarcely do more than sleep here, what do I want with the superfluities of wealth? You do not know, moreover, how little I care for anything in this world."

They wished each other a friendly good-night with a warm shake of the hand, and went to bed. But before the commandant slept, he came to more than one conclusion as to the man who hour by hour grew greater in his eyes.

II

A DOCTOR'S ROUND

THE FIRST THING next morning Genestas went to the stable, drawn thither by the affection that every man feels for the horse that he rides. Nicolle's method of rubbing down the animal was quite satisfactory.

"Up already, Commandant Bluteau?" cried Benassis, as

he came upon his guest. "You hear the drum beat in the morning wherever you go, even in the country! You are a regular soldier!"

"Are you all right?" replied Genestas, holding out his hand with a friendly gesture.

"I am never really all right," answered Benassis, half merrily, half sadly.

"Did you sleep well, sir?" inquired Jacquotte.

"Faith, yes, my beauty; the bed as you made it was fit for a queen."

Jacquotte's face beamed as she followed her master and his guest, and when she had seen them seat themselves at table, she remarked to Nicolle—"He is not a bad sort, after all, that officer gentleman."

"I am sure he is not, he has given me two francs already."

"We will begin to-day by calling at two places where there have been deaths," Benassis said to his visitor as they left the dining-room. "Although doctors seldom deign to confront their supposed victims, I will take you round to the two houses, where you will be able to make some interesting observations of human nature; and the scenes to which you will be a witness will show you that in the expression of their feelings our folk among the hills differ greatly from the dwellers in the lowlands. Up among the mountain peaks in our canton they cling to customs that bear the impress of an older time, and that vaguely recall scenes in the Bible. Nature has traced out a line over our mountain ranges; the whole appearance of the country is different on either side of it. You find strength of character up above, flexibility and quickness of perception below; they have larger ways of regarding things among the hills, while the bent of the lowlands is always toward the material interests of existence. I have never seen a difference so strongly marked, unless it has been in the Val d'Ajou, where the northern side is peopled by a tribe of idiots, and the southern by an intelligent race There is nothing but a stream in the valley bottom to

separate these two populations, which are utterly dissimilar in every respect, as different in face and stature as in manners, customs, and occupation. A fact of this kind should compel those who govern a country to make very extensive studies of local differences before passing laws that are to affect the great mass of the people. But the horses are ready, let us start!"

In a short time the two horsemen reached a house in a part of the township that was overlooked by the mountains of the Grande Chartreuse. Before the door of the dwelling, which was fairly clean and tidy, they saw a coffin, set upon two chairs, and covered with a black pall. Four tall candles stood about it, and on a stool near by there was a shallow brass dish full of holy water, in which a branch of green boxwood was steeping. Every passer-by went into the yard, knelt by the side of the dead, said a *Paternoster*, and sprinkled a few drops of holy water on the bier. Above the black cloth that covered the coffin rose the green sprays of a jessamine that grew beside the doorway, and a twisted vine-shoot, already in leaf, overran the lintel. Even the saddest ceremonies demand that things shall appear to the best advantage, and in obedience to this vaguely-felt requirement a young girl had been sweeping the front of the house. The dead man's eldest son, a young peasant about twenty-two years of age, stood motionless, leaning against the door-post. The tears in his eyes came and went without falling, or perhaps he furtively brushed them away. Benassis and Genestas saw all the details of this scene as they stood beyond the low wall; they fastened their horses to one of the row of poplar trees that grew along it, and entered the yard just as the widow came out of the byre. A woman carrying a jug of milk was with her, and spoke.

"Try to bear up bravely, my poor Pelletier," she said.

"Ah! my dear, after twenty-five years of life together, it is very hard to lose your man," and her eyes brimmed over with tears. "Will you pay the two *sous?*" she added, after a moment, as she held out her hand to her neighbor.

"There, now! I had forgotten about it," said the other woman, giving her the coin. "Come, neighbor, don't take on so. Ah! there is M. Benassis!"

"Well, poor mother, how are you going on? A little better?" asked the doctor.

"*Dame!*" she said, as the tears fell fast, "we must go on, all the same, that is certain. I tell myself that my man is out of pain now. He suffered so terribly! But come inside, sir. Jacques, set some chairs for these gentlemen. Come, stir yourself a bit. Lord bless you! if you were to stop there for a century, it would not bring your poor father back again. And now, you will have to do the work of two."

"No, no, good woman, leave your son alone, we will not sit down. You have a boy there who will take care of you, and who is quite fit to take his father's place."

"Go and change your clothes, Jacques," cried the widow; "you will be wanted directly."

"Well, good-by, mother," said Benassis.

"Your servant, gentlemen."

"Here, you see, death is looked upon as an event for which every one is prepared," said the doctor; "it brings no interruption to the course of family life, and they will not even wear mourning of any kind. No one cares to be at the expense of it; they are all either too poor or too parsimonious in the villages hereabout, so that mourning is unknown in country districts. Yet the custom of wearing mourning is something better than a law or a usage, it is an institution somewhat akin to all moral obligations. But in spite of our endeavors, neither M. Janvier nor I have succeeded in making our peasants understand the great importance of public demonstrations of feeling for the maintenance of social order. These good folk, who have only just begun to think and act for themselves, are slow as yet to grasp the changed conditions which should attach them to these theories. They have only reached those ideas which conduce to economy and to physical welfare; in the future, if some one

else carries on this work of mine, they will come to understand the principles that serve to uphold and preserve public order and justice. As a matter of fact, it is not sufficient to be an honest man, you must appear to be honest in the eyes of others. Society does not live by moral ideas alone; its existence depends upon actions in harmony with those ideas.

"In most country communes, out of a hundred families deprived by death of their head, there are only a few individuals capable of feeling more keenly than the others, who will remember the death for very long; in a year's time the rest will have forgotten all about it. Is not this forgetfulness a sore evil? A religion is the very heart of a nation; it expresses their feelings and their thoughts, and exalts them by giving them an object; but unless outward and visible honor is paid to a God, religion cannot exist; and, as a consequence, human ordinances lose all their force. If the conscience belongs to God and to Him only, the body is amenable to social law. Is it not, therefore, a first step toward atheism to efface every sign of pious sorrow in this way, to neglect to impress on children who are not yet old enough to reflect, and on all other people who stand in need of example, the necessity of obedience to human law, by openly manifested resignation to the will of Providence, who chastens and consoles, who bestows and takes away worldly wealth? I confess that, after passing through a period of sneering incredulity, I have come during my life here to recognize the value of the rites of religion and of religious observances in the family, and to discern the importance of household customs and domestic festivals. The family will always be the basis of human society. Law and authority are first felt there; there, at any rate, the habit of obedience should be learned. Viewed in the light of all their consequences, the spirit of the family and paternal authority are two elements but little developed as yet in our new legislative system. Yet in the family, the commune, the department, lies the whole of our country. The

laws ought therefore to be based on these three great divisions.

"In my opinion, marriages, the birth of infants, and the deaths of heads of households, cannot be surrounded with too much circumstance. The secret of the strength of Catholicism, and of the deep root that it has taken in the ordinary life of man, lies precisely in this—that it steps in to invest every important event in his existence with a pomp that is so naïvely touching, and so grand, whenever the priest rises to the height of his mission and brings his office into harmony with the sublimity of Christian doctrine.

"Once I looked upon the Catholic religion as a cleverly exploited mass of prejudices and superstitions, which an intelligent civilization ought to deal with according to its deserts. Here I have discovered its political necessity and its usefulness as a moral agent; here, moreover, I have come to understand its power, through a knowledge of the actual thing which the word expresses. Religion means a bond or tie, and certainly a cult—or, in other words, the outward and visible form of religion is the only force that can bind the various elements of society together and mold them into a permanent form. Lastly, it was also here that I have felt the soothing influence that religion sheds over the wounds of humanity, and (without going further into the subject) I have seen how admirably it is suited to the fervid temperaments of southern races.

"Let us take the road up the hillside," said the doctor, interrupting himself; "we must reach the plateau up there. Thence we shall look down upon both valleys, and you will see a magnificent view. The plateau lies three thousand feet above the level of the Mediterranean; we shall see over Savoy and Dauphiné, and the mountain ranges of the Lyonnais and Rhone. We shall be in another commune, a hill commune; and on a farm belonging to M. Gravier you will see the kind of scene of which I have spoken. There the great events of life are invested with a solemnity which comes up to my ideas. Mourning for the dead is rigorously

prescribed. Poor people will beg in order to purchase black clothing, and no one refuses to give in such a case. There are few days in which the widow does not mention her loss; she always speaks of it with tears, and her grief is as deep after ten days of sorrow as on the morning after her bereavement. Manners are patriarchal: the father's authority is unlimited, his word is law. He takes his meals sitting by himself at the head of the table; his wife and children wait upon him, and those about him never address him without using certain respectful forms of speech, while every one remains standing and uncovered in his presence. Men brought up in this atmosphere are conscious of their dignity; to my way of thinking, it is a noble education to be brought up among these customs. And, for the most part, they are upright, thrifty, and hardworking people in this commune. The father of every family, when he is old and past work, divides his property equally among his children, and they support him; that is the usual way here. An old man of ninety, in the last century, who had divided everything he had among his four children, went to live with each one in turn for three months in the year. As he left the oldest to go to the home of a younger brother, one of his friends asked him, 'Well, are you satisfied with the arrangement?' 'Faith! yes,' the old man answered; 'they have treated me as if I had been their own child.' That answer of his seemed so remarkable to an officer then stationed at Grenoble, that he repeated it in more than one Parisian salon. That officer was the celebrated moralist Vauvenargues, and in this way the beautiful saying came to the knowledge of another writer named Chamfort. Ah! still more forcible phrases are often struck out among us, but they lack a historian worthy of them."

"I have come across Moravians and Lollards in Bohemia and Hungary," said Genestas. "They are a kind of people something like your mountaineers, good folk who endure the sufferings of war with angelic patience."

"Men living under simple and natural conditions are

bound to be almost alike in all countries. Sincerity of life takes but one form. It is true that a country life often extinguishes thought of a wider kind; but evil propensities are weakened and good qualities are developed by it. In fact, the fewer the numbers of the human beings collected together in a place, the less crime, evil thinking, and general bad behavior will be found in it. A pure atmosphere counts for a good deal in purity of morals."

The two horsemen, who had been climbing the stony road at a foot pace, now reached the level space of which Benassis had spoken. It is a strip of land lying round about the base of a lofty mountain peak, a bare surface of rock with no growth of any kind upon it; deep clefts are riven in its sheer inaccessible sides. The gray crest of the summit towers above the ledge of fertile soil which lies around it, a domain sometimes narrower, sometimes wider, and altogether about a hundred acres in extent. Here, through a vast break in the line of the hills to the south, the eye sees French Maurienne, Dauphiné, the crags of Savoy, and the far-off mountains of the Lyonnais. Genestas was gazing from this point, over a land that lay far and wide in the spring sunlight, when there arose the sound of a wailing cry.

"Let us go on," said Benassis; "the wail for the dead has begun, that is the name they give to this part of the funeral rites."

On the western slope of the mountain peak, the commandant saw the buildings belonging to a farm of some size. The whole place formed a perfect square. The gateway consisted of a granite arch, impressive in its solidity, which added to the old-world appearance of the buildings with the ancient trees that stood about them, and the growth of plant life on the roofs. The house itself lay at the further end of the yard. Barns, sheepfolds, stables, cowsheds, and other buildings lay on either side, and in the midst was the great pool where the manure had been laid to rot. On a thriving farm, such a yard as this is usually full of life and movement, but to-day it was silent and deserted. The poultry

were shut up, the cattle were all in the byres, there was scarcely a sound of animal life. Both stables and cowsheds had been carefully locked, and a clean path to the house had been swept across the yard. The perfect neatness which reigned in a place where everything as a rule was in disorder, the absence of stirring life, the stillness in so noisy a spot, the calm serenity of the hills, the deep shadow cast by the towering peak — everything combined to make a strong impression on the mind.

Genestas was accustomed to painful scenes, yet he could not help shuddering as he saw a dozen men and women standing weeping outside the door of the great hall. "*The master is dead!*" they wailed; the unison of voices gave appalling effect to the words which they repeated twice during the time required to cross the space between the gateway and the farmhouse door. To this wailing lament succeeded moans from within the house; the sound of a woman's voice came through the casements.

"I dare not intrude upon such grief as this," said Genestas to Benassis.

"I always go to visit a bereaved family," the doctor answered, "either to certify the death, or to see that no mischance caused by grief has befallen the living. You need not hesitate to come with me. The scene is impressive, and there will be such a great many people that no one will notice your presence."

As Genestas followed the doctor, he found, in fact, that the first room was full of relations of the dead. They passed through the crowd and stationed themselves at the door of a bedroom that opened out of the great hall which served the whole family for a kitchen and a sitting-room; the whole colony, it should rather be called, for the great length of the table showed that some forty people lived in the house. Benassis's arrival interrupted the discourse of a tall, simply-dressed woman, with thin locks of hair, who held the dead man's hand in hers in a way that spoke eloquently.

The dead master of the house had been arrayed in his

best clothes, and now lay stretched out cold and stiff upon the bed. They had drawn the curtains aside; the thought of heaven seemed to brood over the quiet face and the white hair—it was like the closing scene of a drama. On either side of the bed stood the children and the nearest relations of the husband and wife. These last stood in a line on either side; the wife's kin upon the left, and those of her husband on the right. Both men and women were kneeling in prayer, and almost all of them were in tears. Tall candles stood about the bed. The curé of the parish and his assistants had taken their places in the middle of the room, beside the bier. There was something tragical about the scene, with the head of the family lying before the coffin, which was waiting to be closed down upon him forever.

"Ah!" cried the widow, turning as she saw Benassis, "if the skill of the best of men could not save you, my dear lord, it was because it was ordained in heaven that you should precede me to the tomb! Yes, this hand of yours, that used to press mine so kindly, is cold! I have lost my dear helpmate forever, and our household has lost its beloved head, for truly you were the guide of us all! Alas! there is not one of those who is weeping with me who has not known all the worth of your nature, and felt the light of your soul, but I alone knew all the patience and the kindness of your heart. Oh! my husband, my husband! must I bid you farewell forever? Farewell to you, our stay and support! Farewell to you, my dear master! And we, your children, for to each of us you gave the same fatherly love, all we, your children, have lost our father!"

The widow flung herself upon the dead body and clasped it in a tight embrace, as if her kisses and the tears with which she covered it could give it warmth again; during the pause, came the wail of the servants—"*The master is dead!*"

"Yes," the widow went on, "he is dead! Our beloved who gave us our bread, who sowed and reaped for us, who watched over our happiness, who guided us through life,

who ruled so kindly among us. *Now* I may speak in his praise, and say that he never caused me the slightest sorrow; he was good and strong and patient. Even while we were torturing him for the sake of his health, so precious to us, 'Let it be, children, it is all no use,' the dear lamb said, just in the same tone of voice with which he had said, 'Everything is all right, friends,' only a few days before. Ah! *grand Dieu!* a few days ago! A few days have been enough to take away the gladness from our house and to darken our lives, to close the eyes of the best, most upright, most revered of men. No one could plow as he could. Night or day he would go about over the mountains, he feared nothing, and when he came back he had always a smile for his wife and children. Ah! he was our best beloved! It was dull here by the fireside when *he* was away, and our food lost all its relish. Oh! how will it be now, when our guardian angel will be laid away under the earth, and we shall never see him any more? Never any more, dear kinsfolk and friends; never any more, my children! Yes, my children have lost their kind father, our relations and friends have lost their good kinsman and their trusty friend, the household has lost its master, and I have lost everything!"

She took the hand of the dead again, and knelt, so that she might press her face close to his as she kissed it. The servants' cry, "*The master is dead!*" was again repeated three times.

Just then the eldest son came to his mother to say, "The people from Saint Laurent have just come, mother; we want some wine for them."

"Take the keys," she said in a low tone, and in a different voice from that in which she had just expressed her grief; "you are the master of the house, my son; see that they receive the welcome that your father would have given them; do not let them find any change."

"Let me have one more long look," she went on. "But, alas! my good husband, you do not feel my presence now,

I cannot bring back warmth to you! I only wish that I could comfort you still, could let you know that so long as I live you will dwell in the heart that you made glad, could tell you that I shall be happy in the memory of my happiness—that the dear thought of you will live on in this room. Yes, so long as God spares me, this room shall be filled with memories of you. Hear my vow, dear husband! Your couch shall always remain as it is now. I will sleep in it no more, since you are dead; henceforward, while I live, it shall be cold and empty. With you, I have lost all that makes a woman; her master, husband, father, friend, companion, and helpmate; I have lost all!"

"*The master is dead!*" the servants wailed. Others raised the cry, and the lament became general. The widow took a pair of scissors that hung at her waist, cut off her hair, and laid the locks in her husband's hand. Deep silence fell on them all.

"That act means that she will not marry again," said Benassis; "this determination was expected by many of the relatives."

"Take it, dear lord!" she said; her emotion brought a tremor to her voice that went to the hearts of all who heard her. "I have sworn to be faithful; I give this pledge to you to keep in the grave. We shall thus be united forever, and through love of your children I will live on among the family in whom you used to feel yourself young again. Oh! that you could hear me, my husband! the pride and joy of my heart! Oh, that you could know that all my power to live, now you are dead, will yet come from you; for I shall live to carry out your sacred wishes and to honor your memory."

Benassis pressed Genestas's hand as an invitation to follow him, and they went out. By this time the first room was full of people who had come from another mountain commune; all of them waited in meditative silence, as if the sorrow and grief that brooded over the house had already taken possession of them. As Benassis and the comman-

dant crossed the threshold, they overheard a few words that passed between one of the new-comers and the eldest son of the late owner.

"Then when did he die?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the eldest son, a man of five-and-twenty years of age, "I did not see him die. He asked for me, and I was not there!" His voice was broken with sobs, but he went on: "He said to me the night before, 'You must go over to the town, my boy, and pay our taxes; my funeral will put that out of your minds, and we shall be behindhand, a thing that has never happened before.' It seemed the best thing to do, so I went; and while I was gone, he died, and I never received his last embrace. I have always been at his side, but he did not see me near him at the last in my place where I had always been."

"*The master is dead!*"

"Alas! he is dead, and I was not there to receive his last words and his latest sigh. And what did the taxes matter? Would it not have been better to lose all our money than to leave home just then? Could all that we have make up to me for the loss of his last farewell. No. *Mon Dieu!* If *your* father falls ill, Jean, do not go away and leave him, or you will lay up a lifelong regret for yourself."

"My friend," said Genestas, "I have seen thousands of men die on the battlefield; death did not wait to let their children bid them farewell; take comfort, you are not the only one."

"But a father who was such a good man!" he replied, bursting into fresh tears.

Benassis took Genestas in the direction of the farm buildings.

"The funeral oration will only cease when the body has been laid in its coffin," said the doctor, "and the weeping woman's language will grow more vivid and impassioned all the while. But a woman only acquires the right to speak in such a strain before so imposing an audience by a blameless life. If the widow could reproach herself with the smallest

of shortcomings, she would not dare to utter a word; for if she did, she would pronounce her own condemnation, she would be at the same time her own accuser and judge. Is there not something sublime in this custom which thus judges the living and the dead? They only begin to wear mourning after a week has elapsed, when it is publicly worn at a meeting of all the family. Their near relations spend the week with the widow and children, to help them to set their affairs in order and to console them. A family gathering at such a time produces a great effect on the minds of the mourners; the consideration for others which possesses men when they are brought into close contact acts as a restraint on violent grief. On the last day, when the mourning garb has been assumed, a solemn banquet is given, and their relations take leave of them. All this is taken very seriously. Any one who was slack in fulfilling his duties after the death of the head of a family would have no one at his own funeral."

The doctor had reached the cowhouse as he spoke; he opened the door and made the commandant enter, that he might show it to him.

"All our cowhouses have been rebuilt after this pattern, captain. Look! Is it not magnificent?"

Genestas could not help admiring the huge place. The cows and oxen stood in two rows, with their tails toward the side walls, and their heads in the middle of the shed. Access to the stalls was afforded by a fairly wide space between them and the wall; you could see their horned heads and shining eyes through the lattice work, so that it was easy for the master to run his eyes over the cattle. The fodder was placed on some staging erected above the stalls, so that it fell into the racks below without waste of labor or material. There was a wide-paved space down the centre, which was kept clean, and ventilated by a thorough draught of air.

"In the winter time," Benassis said, as he walked with Genestas down the middle of the cowhouse, "both men and

women do their work here together in the evenings. The tables are set out here, and in this way the people keep themselves warm without going to any expense. The sheep are housed in the same way. You would not believe how quickly the beasts fall into orderly ways. I have often wondered to see them come in; each knows her proper place, and allows those who take precedence to pass in before her. Look! there is just room enough in each stall to do the milking and to rub the cattle down; and the floor slopes a little to facilitate drainage."

"One can judge of everything else from the sight of this cowhouse," said Genestas; "without flattery, these are great results indeed!"

"We have had some trouble to bring them about," Benassis answered; "but then, see what fine cattle they are!"

"They are splendid beasts certainly; you had good reason to praise them to me," answered Genestas.

"Now," said the doctor, when he had mounted his horse and passed under the gateway, "we are going over some of the newly cleared waste, and through the corn land. I have christened this little corner of our commune 'La Beauce.' "

For about an hour they rode at a foot pace across fields in a state of high cultivation, on which the soldier complimented the doctor; then they came down the mountain side into the township again, talking whenever the pace of their horses allowed them to do so. At last they reached a narrow glen, down which they rode into the main valley.

"I promised yesterday," Benassis said to Genestas, "to show you one of the two soldiers who left the army and came back to us after the fall of Napoleon. We shall find him somewhere hereabout, if I am not mistaken. The mountain streams flow into a sort of natural reservoir or tarn up here; the earth they bring down has silted it up, and he is engaged in clearing it out. But if you are to take any interest in the man, I must tell you his history. His name is Gondrin. He was only eighteen years old when he was drawn in the great conscription of 1792, and drafted into a corps of gun-

ners. He served as a private soldier in Napoleon's campaigns in Italy, followed him to Egypt, and came back from the East after the Peace of Amiens. In the time of the Empire he was incorporated in the Pontoon Troop of the Guard, and was constantly on active service in Germany, lastly the poor fellow made the Russian campaign."

"We are brothers-in-arms, then, to some extent," said Genestas; "I have made the same campaigns. Only an iron frame could stand the tricks played by so many different climates. My word for it, those who are still standing on their stumps after marching over Italy, Egypt, Germany, Portugal, and Russia must have applied to Providence and taken out a patent for living."

"Just so, you will see a solid fragment of a man," answered Benassis. "You know all about the Retreat from Moscow; it is useless to tell you about it. This man I have told you of is one of the pontooners of the Beresina; he helped to construct the bridge by which the army made the passage, and stood waist-deep in water to drive in the first piles. General Eblé, who was in command of the pontooners, could only find forty-two men who were plucky enough, in Gondrin's phrase, to tackle that business. The general himself came down to the stream to hearten and cheer the men, promising each of them a pension of a thousand francs and the Cross of the Legion of Honor. The first who went down into the Beresina had his leg taken off by a block of ice, and the man himself was washed away; but you will better understand the difficulty of the task when you hear the end of the story. Of the forty-two volunteers, Gondrin is the only one alive to-day. Thirty-nine of them lost their lives in the Beresina, and the two others died miserably in a Polish hospital.

"The poor fellow himself only returned from Wilna in 1814, to find the Bourbons restored to power. General Eblé (of whom Gondrin cannot speak without tears in his eyes) was dead. The pontooner was deaf, and his health was shattered; and as he could neither read nor write, he found no

one left to help him or to plead his cause. He begged his way to Paris, and while there made application at the War Office, not for the thousand francs of extra pension which had been promised to him, nor yet for the Cross of the Legion of Honor, but only for the bare pension due to him after twenty-two years of service, and I do not know how many campaigns. He did not obtain his pension or his travelling expenses; he did not even receive his arrears of pay. He spent a year in making fruitless solicitations, holding out his hands in vain to those whom he had saved; and at the end of it he came back here, sorely disheartened but resigned to his fate. This hero unknown to fame does draining work on the land, for which he is paid ten sous the fathom. He is accustomed to working in a marshy soil, and so, as he says, he gets jobs which no one else cares to take. He can make about three francs a day by clearing out ponds, or draining meadows that lie under water. His deafness makes him seem surly, and he is not naturally inclined to say very much, but there is a good deal in him.

"We are very good friends. He dines with me on the day of Austerlitz, on the Emperor's birthday, and on the anniversary of the disaster at Waterloo, and during the dessert he always receives a napoleon to pay for his wine every quarter. Every one in the commune shares in my feeling of respect for him; if he would allow them to support him, nothing would please them better. At every house to which he goes the people follow my example, and show their esteem by asking him to dine with them. It is a feeling of pride that leads him to work, and it is only as a portrait of the Emperor that he can be induced to take my twenty-franc piece. He has been deeply wounded by the injustice that has been done him; but I think regret for the Cross is greater than the desire for his pension.

"He has one great consolation. After the bridges had been constructed across the Beresina, General Eblé presented such of the pontooners as were not disabled to the Emperor, and Napoleon embraced poor Gondrin—perhaps but for that

accolade he would have died ere now. This memory and the hope that some day Napoleon will return are all that Gondrin lives by. Nothing will ever persuade him that Napoleon is dead, and so convinced is he that the Emperor's captivity is wholly and solely due to the English that I believe he would be ready on the slightest pretext to take the life of the best-natured alderman that ever travelled for pleasure in foreign parts."

"Let us go on as fast as possible!" cried Genestas. He had listened to the doctor's story with rapt attention, and now seemed to recover consciousness of his surroundings. "Let us hurry! I long to see that man!"

Both of them put their horses to a gallop.

"The other soldier that I spoke of," Benassis went on, "is another of those men of iron who have knocked about everywhere with our armies. His life, like that of all French soldiers, has been made up of bullets, sabre strokes, and victories; he has had a very rough time of it, and has only worn the woollen epaulets. He has a fanatical affection for Napoleon, who conferred the Cross upon him on the field of Valentina. He is of a jovial turn of mind, and, like a genuine Dauphinois, has always looked after his own interests, has his pension, and the honors of the Legion. Goguelat is his name. He was an infantry man, who exchanged into the Guard in 1812. He is Gondrin's better half, so to speak, for the two have taken up house together. They both lodge with a pedler's widow, and make over their money to her. She is a kind soul, who boards them and looks after them and their clothes as if they were her children.

"In his quality of local postman, Goguelat carries all the news of the countryside, and a good deal of practice acquired in this way has made him an orator in great request at up-sittings, and the champion teller of stories in the district. Gondrin looks upon him as a very knowing fellow, and something of a wit; and whenever Goguelat talks about Napoleon, his comrade seems to understand what he is saying from the movement of his lips. There will be an up-sitting (as they

call it) in one of my barns to-night. If these two come over to it, and we can manage to see without being seen, I shall treat you to a view of the spectacle. But here we are, close to the ditch, and I do not see my friend the pontooner."

The doctor and the commandant looked everywhere about them; Gondrin's soldier's coat lay there beside a heap of black mud, and his wheelbarrow, spade, and pickaxe were visible, but there was no sign of the man himself along the various pebbly watercourses, for the wayward mountain streams had hollowed out channels that were almost overgrown with low bushes.

"He cannot be so very far away. Gondrin! Where are you?" shouted Benassis.

Genestas first saw the curling smoke from a tobacco pipe rise among the brushwood on a bank of rubbish not far away. He pointed it out to the doctor, who shouted again. The old pontooner raised his head at this, recognized the mayor, and came toward them down a little pathway.

"Well, old friend," said Benassis, making a sort of speaking-trumpet with his hand. "Here is a comrade of yours, who was out in Egypt, come to see you."

Gondrin raised his face at once and gave Genestas a swift, keen, and searching look, one of those glances by which old soldiers are wont at once to take the measure of any impending danger. He saw the red ribbon that the commandant wore, and made a silent and respectful military salute.

"If the Little Corporal were alive," the officer cried, "you would have the Cross of the Legion of Honor and a handsome pension besides, for every man who wore epaulets on the other side of the river owed his life to you on the 1st of October, 1812. But I am not the Minister of War, my friend," the commandant added as he dismounted, and with a sudden rush of feeling he grasped the laborer's hand.

The old pontooner drew himself up at the words, he knocked the ashes from his pipe, and put it in his pocket.

"I only did my duty, sir," he said, with his head bent down; "but others have not done their duty by me. They

asked for my papers! Why, the Twenty-ninth Bulletin, I told them, must do instead of my papers!"

"But you must make another application, comrade. You are bound to have justice done you in these days, if influence is brought to bear in the right quarter."

"Justice!" cried the veteran. The doctor and the commandant shuddered at the tone in which he spoke.

In the brief pause that followed, both the horsemen looked at the man before them, who seemed like a fragment of the wreck of great armies which Napoleon had filled with men of bronze sought out from among three generations. Gondrin was certainly a splendid specimen of that seemingly indestructible mass of men which might be cut to pieces but never gave way. The old man was scarcely five feet high, wide across the shoulders, and broad-chested; his face was sunburned, furrowed with deep wrinkles, but the outlines were still firm in spite of the hollows in it, and one could see even now that it was the face of a soldier. It was a rough-hewn countenance, his forehead seemed like a block of granite; but there was a weary expression about his face, and the gray hairs hung scantily about his head, as if life were waning there already. Everything about him indicated unusual strength; his arms were covered thickly with hair, and so was the chest, which was visible through the opening of his coarse shirt. In spite of his almost crooked legs, he held himself firm and erect, as if nothing could shake him.

"Justice," he said once more; "there never will be justice for the like of us. We cannot send bailiffs to the Government to demand our dues for us; and as the wallet must be filled somehow," he said, striking his stomach, "we cannot afford to wait. Moreover, these gentry who lead snug lives in government offices may talk and talk, but their words are not good to eat, so I have come back again here to draw my pay out of the commonalty," he said, striking the mud with his spade.

"Things must not be left in that way, old comrade," said Genestas. "I owe my life to you, and it would be ungrate-

ful of me if I did not lend you a hand. I have not forgotten the passage over the bridges in the Beresina, and it is fresh in the memories of some brave fellows of my acquaintance; they will back me up, and the nation shall give you the recognition you deserve."

"You will be called a Bonapartist! Please do not meddle in the matter, sir. I have gone to the rear now, and I have dropped into my hole here like a spent bullet. But after riding on camels through the desert, and drinking my glass by the fireside in Moscow, I never thought that I should come back to die here beneath the trees that my father planted," and he began to work again.

"Poor old man!" said Genestas, as they turned to go. "I should do the same if I were in his place; we have lost our father. Everything seems dark to me now that I have seen that man's hopelessness," he went on, addressing Benassis; "he does not know how much I am interested in him, and he will think that I am one of those gilded rascals who cannot feel for a soldier's sufferings."

He turned quickly and went back, grasped the veteran's hand, and spoke loudly in his ear—"I swear by the Cross I wear—the Cross of Honor it used to be—that I will do all that man can do to obtain your pension for you; even if I have to swallow a dozen refusals from the minister, and to petition the king and the dauphin and the whole shop!"

Old Gondrin quivered as he heard the words. He looked hard at Genestas and said, "Haven't you served in the ranks?" The commandant nodded. The pontooner wiped his hand and took that of Genestas, which he grasped warmly and said—

"I made the army a present of my life, general, when I waded out into the river yonder, and if I am still alive, it is all so much to the good. One moment! Do you care to see to the bottom of it? Well, then, ever since *somebody* was pulled down from his place, I have ceased to care about anything. And, after all," he went on more cheerfully, as he pointed to the land, "they have made over twenty thou-

sand francs to me here, and I am taking it out in detail, as *he* used to say!"

"Well, then, comrade," said Genestas, touched by the grandeur of this forgiveness, "at least you shall have the only thing that you cannot prevent me from giving to you, here below." The commandant tapped his heart, looked once more at the old pontooner, mounted his horse again, and went his way side by side with Benassis.

"Such cruelty as this on the part of a government foments the strife between rich and poor," said the doctor. "People who exercise a little brief authority have never given a serious thought to the consequences that must follow an act of injustice done to a man of the people. It is true that a poor man who needs must work for his daily bread cannot long keep up the struggle; but he can talk, and his words find an echo in every sufferer's heart, so that one bad case of this kind is multiplied, for every one who hears of it feels it as a personal wrong, and the leaven works. Even this is not so serious, but something far worse comes of it. Among the people, these cases of injustice bring about a chronic state of smothered hatred for their social superiors. The middle class becomes the poor man's enemy; they lie without the bounds of his moral code, he tells lies to them and robs them without scruple; indeed, theft ceases to be a crime or a misdemeanor, and is looked upon as an act of vengeance.

"When an official, who ought to see that the poor have justice done them, uses them ill and cheats them of their due, how can we expect the poor starving wretches to bear their troubles meekly and to respect the rights of property? It makes me shudder to think that some under-strapper whose business it is to dust papers in a government office has pocketed Gondrin's promised thousand francs of pension. And yet there are folk who, never having measured the excess of the people's sufferings, accuse the people of excess in the day of their vengeance! When a government has done more harm than good to individuals, its further existence depends on the merest accident, the masses square

the account after their fashion by upsetting it. A statesman ought always to imagine Justice with the poor at her feet, for justice was only invented for the poor."

When they had come within the compass of the township, Benassis saw two people walking along the road in front of them, and turned to his companion, who had been absorbed for some time in thought.

"You have seen a veteran soldier resigned to his life of wretchedness, and now you are about to see an old agricultural laborer who is submitting to the same lot. The man there ahead of us has dug and sown and toiled for others all his life."

Genestas looked and saw an old laborer making his way along the road, in company with an aged woman. He seemed to be afflicted with some form of sciatica, and limped painfully along. His feet were incased in a wretched pair of sabots, and a sort of wallet hung over his shoulder. Several tools lay in the bottom of the bag; their handles, blackened with long use and the sweat of toil, rattled audibly together; while the other end of the wallet behind his shoulder held bread, some walnuts, and a few fresh onions. His legs seemed to be warped, as it were, his back was bent by continual toil; he stooped so much as he walked that he leaned on a long stick to steady himself. His snow-white hair escaped from under a battered hat, grown rusty by exposure to all sorts of weather, and mended here and there with visible stitches of white thread. His clothes, made of a kind of rough canvas, were a mass of patches of contrasting colors. This piece of humanity in ruins lacked none of the characteristics that appeal to our hearts when we see ruins of other kinds.

His wife held herself somewhat more erect. Her clothing was likewise a mass of rags, and the cap that she wore was of the coarsest materials. On her back she carried a rough earthen jar by means of a thong passed through the handles of the great pitcher, which was round in shape and flattened at the sides. They both looked up when they

heard the horses approaching, saw that it was Benassis, and stopped.

The man had worked till he was almost past work, and his faithful helpmate was no less broken with toil. It was painful to see how the summer sun and the winter's cold had blackened their faces, and covered them with such deep wrinkles that their features were hardly discernible. It was not their life history that had been graven on their faces; but it might be gathered from their attitude and bearing. Incessant toil had been the lot of both; they had worked and suffered together; they had had many troubles and few joys to share; and now, like captives grown accustomed to their prison, they seemed to be too familiar with wretchedness to heed it, and to take everything as it came. Yet a certain frank light-heartedness was not lacking in their faces; and, on a closer view, their monotonous life, the lot of so many a poor creature, wellnigh seemed an enviable one. Trouble had set its unmistakable mark upon them, but petty cares had left no traces there.

"Well, my good Father Moreau, I suppose there is no help for it, and you must always be working?"

"Yes, M. Benassis, there are one or two more bits of waste that I mean to clear for you before I knock off work," the old man answered cheerfully, and a light shone in his little black eyes.

"Is that wine that your wife there is carrying? If you will not take a rest now, you ought at any rate to take wine."

"I take a rest? I should not know what to do with myself. The sun and the fresh air put life into me when I am out of doors and busy grubbing up the land. As to the wine, sir, yes, that is wine sure enough, and it is all through your contriving I know that the Mayor at Courteil lets us have it for next to nothing. Ah, you managed it very cleverly, but, all the same, I know you had a hand in it."

"Oh! come, come! Good-day, mother. You are going to work on that bit of land of Champferlu's to-day, of course?"

"Yes, sir; I made a beginning there yesterday evening."

"Capital!" said Benassis. "It must be a satisfaction to you, at times, to see this hillside. You two have broken up almost the whole of the land on it yourselves."

"Lord! yes, sir," answered the old woman, "it has been our doing! We have fairly earned our bread."

"Work, you see, and land to cultivate are the poor man's consols. That good man would think himself disgraced if he went into the poorhouse or begged for his bread; he would choose to die pickaxe in hand, out in the open, in the sunlight. Faith, he bears a proud heart in him. He has worked until work has become his very life; and yet death has no terrors for him! He is a profound philosopher, little as he suspects it. Old Moreau's case suggested the idea to me of founding an almshouse for the country people of the district; a refuge for those who, after working hard all their lives, have reached an honorable old age of poverty.

"I had by no means expected to make the fortune which I have acquired here; indeed, I myself have no use for it, for a man who has fallen from the pinnacle of his hopes needs very little. It costs but little to live, the idler's life alone is a costly one, and I am not sure that the unproductive consumer is not robbing the community at large. There was some discussion about Napoleon's pension after his fall; it came to his ears, and he said that five francs a day and a horse to ride was all that he needed. I meant to have no more to do with money when I came here; but after a time I saw that money means power, and that it is in fact a necessity, if any good is to be done. So I have made arrangements in my will for turning my house into an almshouse, in which old people who have not Moreau's fierce independence can end their days. Part of the income of nine thousand francs brought in by the mill and the rest of my property will be devoted to giving outdoor relief in hard winters to those who really stand in need of it.

"This foundation will be under the control of the Municipal Council, with the addition of the curé, who is to be

president; and in this way the money made in the district will be returned to it. In my will I have laid down the lines on which this institution is to be conducted; it would be tedious to go over them, it is enough to say that I have thought it all out very carefully. I have also created a trust fund, which will some day enable the commune to award several scholarships for children who show signs of promise in art or science. So, even after I am gone, my work of civilization will continue. When you have set yourself to do anything, Captain Bluteau, something within you urges you on, you see, and you cannot bear to leave it unfinished. This craving within us for order and for perfection is one of the signs that point most surely to a future existence. Now, let us quicken our pace, I have my round to finish, and there are five or six more patients still to be visited."

They cantered on for some time in silence, till Benassis said laughingly to his companion, "Come now, Captain Bluteau, you have drawn me out and made me chatter like a magpie, and you have not said a syllable about your own history, which must be an interesting one. When a soldier has come to your time of life, he has seen so much that he must have more than one adventure to tell about."

"Why, my history has been simply the history of the army," answered Genestas. "Soldiers are all after one pattern. Never in command, always giving and taking sabre-cuts in my place, I have lived just like everybody else. I have been wherever Napoleon led us, and have borne a part in every battle in which the Imperial Guard has struck a blow; but everybody knows all about these events. A soldier has to look after his horse, to endure hunger and thirst at times, to fight whenever there is fighting to be done, and there you have the whole history of his life. As simple as saying good-day, is it not? Then there are battles in which your horse casts a shoe at the outset, and lands you in a quandary; and as far as you are concerned, that is the whole of it. In short, I have seen so many countries that seeing them has come to be a matter of course; and I have seen so

many men die that I have come to value my own life at nothing."

"But you yourself must have been in danger at times, and it would be interesting to hear you tell of your personal adventures."

"Perhaps," answered the commandant.

"Well, then, tell me about the adventure that made the deepest impression upon you. Come! do not hesitate. I shall not think that you are wanting in modesty even if you should tell me of some piece of heroism on your part; and when a man is quite sure that he will not be misunderstood, ought he not to find a kind of pleasure in saying, 'I did thus'?"

"Very well, then, I will tell you about something that gives me a pang of remorse from time to time. During fifteen years of warfare it never once happened that I killed a man, save in legitimate defence of self. We are drawn up in line, and we charge; and if we do not strike down those before us, they will begin to draw blood without asking leave, so you have to kill if you do not mean to be killed, and your conscience is quite easy. But once I broke a comrade's back; it happened in a singular way, and it has been a painful thing to me to think of afterward—the man's dying grimace haunts me at times. But you shall judge for yourself.

"It was during the retreat from Moscow," the commandant went on. "The Grand Army had ceased to be itself; we were more like a herd of over-driven cattle. Good-by to discipline! The regiments had lost sight of their colors, every one was his own master, and the Emperor (one need not scruple to say it) knew that it was useless to attempt to exert his authority when things had gone so far. When we reached Studzianka, a little place on the other side of the Beresina, we came upon human dwellings for the first time after several days. There were barns and peasants' cabins to destroy, and pits full of potatoes and beetroot; the army had been without victual and now it fairly ran riot, the first

comers, as you might expect, making a clean sweep of everything.

"I was one of the last to come up. Luckily for me, sleep was the one thing that I longed for just then. I caught sight of a barn and went into it. I looked round and saw a score of generals and officers of high rank, all of them men who, without flattery, might be called great. Junot was there, and Narbonne, the Emperor's aide-de-camp, and all the chiefs of the army. There were common soldiers there as well, not one of whom would have given up his bed of straw to a marshal of France. Some who were leaning their backs against the wall had dropped off to sleep where they stood, because there was no room to lie down; others lay stretched out on the floor—it was a mass of men packed together so closely for the sake of warmth that I looked about in vain for a nook to lie down in. I walked over this flooring of human bodies; some of the men growled, the others said nothing, but no one budged. They would not have moved out of the way of a cannon ball just then; but under the circumstances one was not obliged to practice the maxims laid down by the Child's Guide to Manners. Groping about, I saw at the end of the barn a sort of ledge up above in the roof; no one had thought of scrambling up to it, possibly no one had felt equal to the effort. I clambered up and ensconced myself upon it; and as I lay there at full length, I looked down at the men huddled together like sheep below. It was a pitiful sight, yet it almost made me laugh. A man here and there was gnawing a frozen carrot, with a kind of animal satisfaction expressed in his face; and thunderous snores came from generals who lay muffled up in ragged cloaks. The whole barn was lighted by a blazing pine log; it might have set the place on fire, and no one would have troubled to get up and put it out.

"I lay down on my back, and, naturally, just before I dropped off, my eyes travelled to the roof above me, and then I saw that the main beam which bore the weight of the joists was being slightly shaken from east to west. The

blessed thing danced about in fine style. 'Gentlemen,' said I, 'one of our friends outside has a mind to warm himself at our expense.' A few moments more and the beam was sure to come down. 'Gentlemen! gentlemen!' I shouted, 'we shall all be killed in a minute! Look at the beam there!' and I made such a noise that my bed-fellows awoke at last. Well, sir, they all stared up at the beam, and then those who had been sleeping turned round and went off to sleep again, while those who were eating did not even stop to answer me.

"Seeing how things were, there was nothing for it but to get up and leave my place, and run the risk of finding it taken by somebody else, for all the lives of this heap of heroes were at stake. So out I go. I turn the corner of the barn and come upon a great devil of a Würtemberger, who was tugging at the beam with a certain enthusiasm. 'Aho! aho!' I shouted, trying to make him understand that he must desist from his toil. '*Gehe mir aus dem Gesicht, oder ich schlag dich todt!*—Get out of my sight, or I will kill you,' he cried. 'Ah! yes, just so, *Que mire aous dem guesit,*' I answered; 'but that is not the point.' I picked up his gun that he had left on the ground, and broke his back with it; then I turned in again, and went off to sleep. Now you know the whole business."

"But that was a case of self-defence, in which one man suffered for the good of many, so you have nothing to reproach yourself with," said Benassis.

"The rest of them thought that it had only been my fancy; but fancy or no, a good many of them are living comfortably in fine houses to-day, without feeling their hearts oppressed by gratitude."

"Then would you only do people a good turn in order to receive that exorbitant interest called gratitude?" said Benassis, laughing. "That would be asking a great deal for your outlay."

"Oh, I know quite well that all the merit of a good deed evaporates at once if it benefits the doer in the slightest degree," said Genestas. "If he tells the story of it, the toll

brought in to his vanity is a sufficient substitute for gratitude. But if every doer of kindly actions always held his tongue about them, those who reaped the benefits would hardly say very much either. Now the people, according to your system, stand in need of examples, and how are they to hear of them amid this general reticence? Again, there is this poor pontooner of ours, who saved the whole French army, and who was never able to tell his tale to any purpose; suppose that he had lost the use of his limbs, would the consciousness of what he had done have found him in bread? Answer me that, philosopher!"

"Perhaps the rules of morality cannot be absolute," Benassis answered; "though this is a dangerous idea, for it leaves the egotist free to settle cases of conscience in his own favor. Listen, captain; is not the man who never swerves from the principles of morality greater than he who transgresses them, even through necessity? Would not our veteran, dying of hunger, and unable to help himself, be worthy to rank with Homer? Human life is doubtless a final trial of virtue as of genius, for both of which a better world is waiting. Virtue and genius seem to me to be the fairest forms of that complete and constant surrender of self that Jesus Christ came among men to teach. Genius sheds its light in the world and lives in poverty all its days, and virtue sacrifices itself in silence for the general good."

"I quite agree with you, sir," said Genestas; "but those who dwell on earth are men after all, and not angels; we are not perfect."

"That is quite true," Benassis answered. "And as for errors, I myself have abused the indulgence. But ought we not to aim, at any rate, at perfection? Is not virtue a fair ideal which the soul must always keep before it, a standard set up by Heaven?"

"Amen," said the soldier. "An upright man is a magnificent thing, I grant you; but, on the other hand, you must admit that virtue is a divinity who may indulge in a scrap of gossip now and then in the strictest propriety."

The doctor smiled, but there was a melancholy bitterness in his tone as he said, "Ah! sir, you regard things with the lenience natural to those who live at peace with themselves; and I with all the severity of one who sees much that he would fain obliterate in the story of his life."

The two horsemen reached a cottage beside the bed of the torrent; the doctor dismounted and went into the house. Genestas, on the threshold, looked over the bright spring landscape that lay without, and then at the dark interior of the cottage, where a man was lying in bed. Benassis examined his patient, and suddenly exclaimed, "My good woman, it is no use my coming here unless you carry out my instructions! You have been giving him bread; you want to kill your husband, I suppose? Botheration! If after this you give him anything besides tisane of couch-grass, I will never set foot in here again, and you can look where you like for another doctor."

"But, dear M. Benassis, my old man was starving, and when he had eaten nothing for a whole fortnight—"

"Oh, yes, yes. Now will you listen to me. If you let your husband eat a single mouthful of bread before I give him leave to take solid food, you will kill him, do you hear?"

"He shall not have anything, sir. Is he any better?" she asked, following the doctor to the door.

"Why, no. You have made him worse by feeding him. Shall I never get it into your stupid heads that you must not stuff people who are being dieted?"

"The peasants are incorrigible," Benassis went on, speaking to Genestas. "If a patient has eaten nothing for two or three days, they think he is at death's door, and they cram him with soup or wine or something. Here is a wretched woman for you that has all but killed her husband."

"Kill my husband with a little mite of a sop in wine!"

"Certainly, my good woman. It amazes me that he is still alive after that mess you cooked for him. Mind that you do exactly as I have told you."

"Yes, dear sir, I would far rather die myself than lose him."

"Oh! as to that I shall soon see. I shall come again to-morrow evening to bleed him."

"Let us walk along the side of the stream," Benassis said to Genestas; "there is only a footpath between this cottage and the next house where I must pay a call. That man's little boy will hold our horses.

"You must admire this lovely valley of ours a little," he went on; "it is like an English garden, is it not? The laborer who lives in the cottage which we are going to visit has never got over the death of one of his children. The eldest boy, he was only a lad, would try to do a man's work last harvest-tide; it was beyond his strength, and before the autumn was out he died of a decline. This is the first case of really strong fatherly love that has come under my notice. As a rule, when their children die, the peasant's regret is for the loss of a useful chattel, and a part of their stock-in-trade, and the older the child, the heavier their sense of loss. A grown-up son or daughter is so much capital to the parents. But this poor fellow really loved that boy of his. 'Nothing can comfort me for my loss,' he said one day when I came across him out in the fields. He had forgotten all about his work, and was standing there motionless, leaning on his scythe; he had picked up his hone, it lay in his hand, and he had forgotten to use it. He has never spoken since of his grief to me, but he has grown sad and silent. Just now it is one of his little girls who is ill."

Benassis and his guest reached the little house as they talked. It stood beside a pathway that led to a bark-mill. They saw a man about forty years of age, standing under a willow tree, eating bread that had been rubbed with a clove of garlic.

"Well, Gasnier, is the little one doing better?"

"I do not know, sir," he said dejectedly, "you will see; my wife is sitting with her. In spite of all your care, I am very much afraid that death will come to empty my home for me."

"Do not lose heart, Gasnier. Death is too busy to take up his abode in any dwelling."

Benassis went into the house, followed by the father. Half an hour later he came out again. The mother was with him this time, and he spoke to her, "You need have no anxiety about her now; follow out my instructions; she is out of danger."

"If you are growing tired of this sort of thing," the doctor said to the officer, as he mounted his horse, "I can put you on the way to the town, and you can return."

"No, I am not tired of it, I give you my word."

"But you will only see cottages everywhere, and they are all alike; nothing, to outward seeming, is more monotonous than the country."

"Let us go on," said the officer.

They rode on in this way for several hours, and after going from one side of the canton to the other, they returned toward evening to the precincts of the town.

"I must just go over there," the doctor said to Genestas, as he pointed out a place where a cluster of elm-trees grew. "Those trees may possibly be two hundred years old," he went on, "and that is where the woman lives on whose account the lad came to fetch me last night at dinner, with a message that she had turned quite white."

"Was it anything serious?"

"No," said Benassis, "an effect of pregnancy. It is the last month with her, a time at which some women suffer from spasms. But by way of precaution, I must go in any case to make sure that there are no further alarming symptoms; I shall see her through her confinement myself. And, moreover, I should like to show you one of our new industries; there is a brickfield here. It is a good road; shall we gallop?"

"Will your animal keep up with mine?" asked Genestas. "Heigh! Neptune!" he called to his horse, and in a moment the officer had been carried far ahead, and was lost to sight in a cloud of dust, but in spite of the paces of his horse he

still heard the doctor beside him. At a word from Benassis his own horse left the commandant so far behind that the latter only came up with him at the gate of the brickfield, where the doctor was quietly fastening the bridle to the gatepost.

"The devil take it!" cried Genestas, after a look at the horse, that was neither sweated nor blown. "What kind of animal have you there?"

"Ah!" said the doctor, "you took him for a screw! The history of this fine fellow would take up too much time just now; let it suffice to say that Roustan is a thoroughbred barb from the Atlas Mountains, and a Barbary horse is as good as an Arab. This one of mine will gallop up the mountain roads without turning a hair, and will never miss his footing in a canter along the brink of a precipice. He was a present to me, and I think that I deserved it, for in this way a father sought to repay me for his daughter's life. She is one of the wealthiest heiresses in Europe, and she was at the brink of death when I found her on the road to Savoy. If I were to tell you how I cured that young lady, you would take me for a quack. Aha! that is the sound of the bells on the horses and the rumbling of a wagon; it is coming along this way; let us see, perhaps that is Vigneau himself; and if so, take a good look at him!"

In another moment the officer saw a team of four huge horses, like those which are owned by prosperous farmers in Brie. The harness, the little bells, and the knots of braid in their manes were clean and smart. The great wagon itself was painted bright blue, and perched aloft in it sat a stalwart, sunburned youth, who shouldered his whip like a gun and whistled a tune.

"No," said Benassis, "that is only the wagoner. But see how the master's prosperity in business is reflected by all his belongings, even by the carter's wagon! Is it not a sign of a capacity for business not very often met with in remote country places?"

"Yes, yes, it all looks very smart indeed," the officer answered.

"Well, Vigneau has two more wagons and teams like that one, and he has a small pony besides for business purposes, for he does a trade over a wide area. And only four years ago he had nothing in the world! Stay, that is a mistake—he had some debts. But let us go in."

"Is Mme. Vigneau in the house?" Benassis asked of the young wagoner.

"She is out in the garden, sir; I saw her just now by the hedge down yonder; I will go and tell her that you are here."

Genestas followed Benassis across a wide open space with a hedge about it. In one corner various heaps of clay had been piled up, destined for tiles and pantiles, and a stack of brushwood and logs (fuel for the kiln no doubt) lay in another part of the inclosure. Further away some workmen were pounding chalk stones and tempering the clay in a space inclosed by hurdles. The tiles, both round and square, were made under the great elms opposite the gateway, in a vast green arbor bounded by the roofs of the drying-shed, and near this last the yawning mouth of the kiln was visible. Some long-handled shovels lay about the worn cinder path. A second row of buildings had been erected parallel with these. There was a sufficiently wretched dwelling which housed the family, and some outbuildings—sheds and stables and a barn. The cleanliness that predominated throughout, and the thorough repair in which everything was kept, spoke well for the vigilance of the master's eyes. Some poultry and pigs wandered at large over the field.

"Vigneau's predecessor," said Benassis, "was a good-for-nothing, a lazy rascal who cared about nothing but drink. He had been a workman himself; he could keep a fire in his kiln and could put a price on his work, and that was about all he knew; he had no energy, and no idea of business. If no one came to buy his wares of him, they simply stayed on hand and were spoiled, and so he lost the value of them. So he died of want at last. He had ill-treated his wife till she was almost idiotic, and she lived in a state of abject

wretchedness. It was so painful to see this laziness and incurable stupidity, and I so much disliked the sight of the tile-works, that I never came this way if I could help it. Luckily, both the man and his wife were old people. One fine day the tile-maker had a paralytic stroke, and I had him removed to the hospital at Grenoble at once. The owner of the tile-works agreed to take it over without disputing about its condition, and I looked round for new tenants who would take their part in improving the industries of the canton.

"Mme. Gravier's waiting-maid had married a poor workman, who was earning so little with the potter who employed him that he could not support his household. He listened to my advice, and actually had sufficient courage to take a lease of our tile-works, when he had not so much as a penny. He came and took up his abode here, taught his wife, her aged mother, and his own mother how to make tiles, and made workmen of them. How they managed, I do not know, upon my honor! Vigneau probably borrowed fuel to heat his kiln, he certainly worked by day, and fetched in his materials in basket-loads by night; in short, no one knew what boundless energy he brought to bear upon his enterprise; and the two old mothers, clad in rags, worked like negroes. In this way Vigneau contrived to fire several batches, and lived for the first year on bread that was hardly won by the toil of his household.

"Still, he made a living. His courage, patience, and sterling worth interested many people in him, and he began to be known. He was indefatigable. He would hurry over to Grenoble in the morning, and sell his bricks and tiles there; then he would return home about the middle of the day, and go back again to the town at night. He seemed to be in several places at once. Toward the end of the first year he took two little lads to help him. Seeing how things were, I loaned him some money, and since then from year to year the fortunes of the family have steadily improved. After the second year was over the two old mothers no longer molded bricks nor pounded stones; they looked after the

little gardens, made the soup, mended the clothes, they did spinning in the evenings, and gathered firewood in the daytime; while the young wife, who can read and write, kept the accounts. Vigneau had a small horse, and rode on his business errands about the neighborhood; next he thoroughly studied the art of brick and tile making, discovered how to make excellent square white paving-tiles, and sold them for less than the usual prices. In the third year he had a cart and a pair of horses, and at the same time his wife's appearance became almost elegant. Everything about his household improved with the improvement in his business, and everywhere there was the same neatness, method, and thrift that had been the making of his little fortune.

"At last he had work enough for six men, to whom he pays good wages; he employs a wagoner, and everything about him wears an air of prosperity. Little by little, in short, by dint of taking pains and extending his business, his income has increased. He bought the tile-works last year, and next year he will rebuild his house. To-day all the worthy folk there are well clothed and in good health. His wife, who used to be so thin and pale when the burden of her husband's cares and anxieties used to press so hardly upon her, has recovered her good looks, and has grown quite young and pretty again. The two old mothers are thoroughly happy, and take the deepest interest in every detail of the housekeeping or of the business. Work has brought money, and the money that brought freedom from care brought health and plenty and happiness. The story of this household is a living history in miniature of the commune since I have known it, and of all young industrial states. The tile factory that used to look so empty, melancholy, ill-kept, and useless, is now in full work, astir with life, and well stocked with everything required. There is a good stock of wood here, and all the raw material for the season's work: for, as you know, tiles can only be made during a few months in the year, between June and September. Is it not a pleasure to see all this activity? My tile-maker has done his share

of the work in every building in the place. He is always wide awake, always coming and going, always busy—'the devourer,' they call him in these parts."

Benassis had scarcely finished speaking when the wicket gate which gave entrance to the garden opened, and a nicely-dressed young woman appeared. She came forward as quickly as her condition allowed, though the two horsemen hastened toward her. Her attire somewhat recalled her former quality of ladies' maid, for she wore a pretty cap, a pink dress, a silk apron, and white stockings. Mme. Vigneau, in short, was a nice-looking woman, sufficiently plump, and if she was somewhat sunburned, her natural complexion must have been very fair. There were a few lines still left in her forehead, traced there by the troubles of past days, but she had a bright and winsome face. She spoke in a persuasive voice, as she saw that the doctor came no further, "Will you not do me the honor of coming inside and resting for a moment, M. Benassis."

"Certainly we will. Comé this way, captain."

"The gentlemen must be very hot! Will you take a little milk or some wine? M. Benassis, please try a little of the wine that my husband has been so kind as to buy for my confinement. You will tell me if it is good."

"You have a good man for your husband."

"Yes, sir," she turned and spoke in quiet tones, "I am very well off."

"We will not take anything, Mme. Vigneau; I only came round this way to see that nothing troublesome had happened."

"Nothing," she said. "I was busy out in the garden, as you saw, turning the soil over for the sake of something to do."

Then the two old mothers came out to speak to Benassis, and the young wagoner planted himself in the middle of the yard, in a spot from whence he could have a good view of the doctor.

"Let us see, let me have your hand," said Benassis, ad-

dressing Mme. Vigneau; and as he carefully felt her pulse, he stood in silence, absorbed in thought. The three women, meanwhile, scrutinized the commandant with the undisguised curiosity that country people do not scruple to express.

"Nothing could be better!" cried the doctor cheerily.

"Will she be confined soon?" both the mothers asked together.

"This week beyond a doubt. Is Vigneau away from home?" he asked, after a pause.

"Yes, sir," the young wife answered; "he is hurrying about settling his business affairs, so as to be able to stay at home during my confinement, the dear man!"

"Well, my children, go on and prosper; continue to increase your wealth and to add to your family."

The cleanliness of the almost ruinous dwelling filled Genestas with admiration.

Benassis saw the officer's astonishment, and said, "There is no one like Mme. Vigneau for keeping a house clean and tidy like this. I wish that several people in the town would come here to take a lesson."

The tile-maker's wife blushed and turned her head away; but the faces of the two old mothers beamed with pleasure at the doctor's words, and the three women walked with them to the spot where the horses were waiting.

"Well, now," the doctor said to the two old women, "here is happiness for you both! Were you not longing to be grandmothers?"

"Oh, do not talk about it," said the young wife; "they will drive me crazy among them. My two mothers wish for a boy, and my husband would like to have a little girl. It will be very difficult to please them all, I think."

"But you yourself," asked Benassis; "what is your wish?"

"Ah, sir, I wish for a child of my own."

"There! She is a mother already," said the doctor to the officer, as he laid his hand on the bridle of his horse.

"Good-by, M. Benassis; my husband will be sadly dis-

appointed to learn that you have been here when he was not at home to see you."

"He has not forgotten to send the thousand tiles to the Grange-aux-Belles for me?"

"You know quite well, sir, that he would keep all the orders in the canton waiting to serve you. Why, taking your money is the thing that troubles him most; but I always tell him that your crowns bring luck with them, and so they do."

"Good-by," said Benassis.

A little group gathered about the bars across the entrance to the tile-works. The three women, the young wagoner, and two workmen who had left off work to greet the doctor, lingered there to have the pleasure of being with him until the last moment, as we are wont to linger with those we love. The promptings of men's hearts must everywhere be the same, and in every land friendship expresses itself in the same gracious ways.

Benassis looked at the height of the sun and spoke to his companion—"There are still two hours of daylight left; and if you are not too hungry we will go to see some one with whom I nearly always spend the interval between the last of my visits and the hour for dinner. She is a charming girl whom every one here calls my 'good friend.' That is the name that they usually give to an affianced bride; but you must not imagine that there is the slightest imputation of any kind implied or intended by the use of the word in this case. Poor child, the care that I have taken of her has, as may be imagined, made her an object of jealousy, but the general opinion entertained as to my character has prevented any spiteful gossip. If no one understands the apparent caprice that has led me to make an allowance to La Fosseuse, so that she can live without being compelled to work, nobody has any doubts as to her character. I have watched over her with friendly care, and every one knows that I should never hesitate to marry her if my affection for her exceeded the limits of friendship. But no woman exists for me here in

the canton or anywhere else," said the doctor, forcing a smile. "Some natures feel a tyrannous need to attach themselves to some one thing or being which they single out from among the beings and things around them; this need is felt most keenly by a man of quick sympathies, and all the more pressingly if his life has been made desolate. So, trust me, it is a favorable sign if a man is strongly attached to his dog or his horse! Among the suffering flock which chance has given into my care, this poor little sufferer has come to be for me like the pet lamb that the shepherd lasses deck with ribbons in my own sunny land of Languedoc; they talk to it and allow it to find pasture by the side of the cornfields, and its leisurely pace is never hurried by the shepherd's dog."

Benassis stood with his hand on his horse's mane as he spoke, ready to spring into the saddle, but making no effort to do so, as though the thought that stirred in him were but little in keeping with rapid movements.

"Let us go," he said at last; "come with me and pay her a visit. I am taking you to see her; does not that tell you that I treat her as a sister?"

As they rode on their way again, Genestas said to the doctor, "Will you regard it as inquisitiveness on my part if I ask to hear more of La Fosseuse? I have come to know the story of many lives through you, and hers cannot be less interesting than some of these."

Benassis stopped his horse as he answered. "Perhaps you will not share in the feelings of interest awakened in me by La Fosseuse. Her fate is like my own; we have both alike missed our vocation; it is the similarity of our lots that occasions my sympathy for her and the feelings that I experience at the sight of her. You either followed your natural bent when you entered upon a military career, or you took a liking for your calling after you had adopted it, otherwise you would not have borne the heavy yoke of military discipline till now; you, therefore, cannot understand the sorrows of a soul that must always feel renewed within it the stir of longings that can never be realized; nor the pining

existenee of a creature forced to live in an alien sphere. Such sufferings as these are known only to these natures and to God who sends their afflictions, for they alone can know how deeply the events of life affect them. You yourself have seen the miseries produced by long wars, till they have almost ceased to impress you, but have you never detected a trace of sadness in your mind at the sight of a tree bearing sear leaves in the midst of spring, some tree that is pining and dying because it has been planted in soil in which it could not find the sustenance required for its full development? Ever since my twentieth year there has been something painful and melancholy for me about the drooping of a stunted plant, and now I cannot bear the sight and turn my head away. My youthful sorrow was a vague presentiment of the sorrows of my later life; it was a kind of sympathy between my present and a future dimly foreshadowed by the life of the tree that before its time was going the way of all trees and men."

"I thought that you had suffered when I saw how kind you were."

"You see, sir," the doctor went on without any reply to the remark made by Genestas, "that to speak of La Fosseuse is to speak of myself. La Fosseuse is a plant in an alien soil; a human plant, moreover, consumed by sad thoughts that have their source in the depths of her nature, and that never cease to multiply. The poor girl is never well and strong. The soul within her kills the body. This fragile creature was suffering from the sorest of all troubles, a trouble which receives the least possible sympathy from our selfish world, and how could I look on with indifferent eyes? For I, a man, strong to wrestle with pain, was nightly tempted to refuse to bear the burden of a sorrow like hers. Perhaps I might actually have refused to bear it but for a thought of religion which soothes my impatience and fills my heart with sweet illusions. Even if we were not children of the same Father in heaven, La Fosseuse would still be my sister in suffering!"

Benassis pressed his knees against his horse's sides, and swept ahead of Commandant Genestas, as if he shrank from continuing this conversation any further. When their horses were once more cantering abreast of each other, he spoke again: "Nature has created this poor girl for sorrow," he said, "as she has created other women for joy. It is impossible to do otherwise than believe in a future life at the sight of natures thus predestined to suffer. La Fosseuse is sensitive and highly strung. If the weather is dark and cloudy, she is depressed; she 'weeps when the sky is weeping,' a phrase of her own; she sings with the birds; she grows happy and serene under a cloudless sky; the loveliness of a bright day passes into her face; a soft sweet perfume is an inexhaustible pleasure to her; I have seen her take delight the whole day long in the scent breathed forth by some mignonette; and, after one of those rainy mornings that bring out all the soul of the flowers and give indescribable freshness and brightness to the day, she seems to overflow with gladness like the green world around her. If it is close and hot, and there is thunder in the air, La Fosseuse feels a vague trouble that nothing can soothe. She lies on her bed, complains of numberless different ills, and does not know what ails her. In answer to my questions, she tells me that her bones are melting, that she is dissolving into water; her 'heart has left her,' to quote another of her sayings.

"I have sometimes come upon the poor child suddenly and found her in tears, as she gazed at the sunset effects we sometimes see here among our mountains, when bright masses of cloud gather and crowd together and pile themselves above the golden peaks of the hills. 'Why are you crying, little one?' I have asked her. 'I do not know, sir,' has been the answer; 'I have grown so stupid with looking up there; I have looked and looked, till I hardly know where I am.' 'But what do you see there?' 'I cannot tell you, sir'; and you might question her in this way all the evening, yet you would never draw a word from her; but she would look at you, and every glance would seem full of thoughts,

or she would sit with tears in her eyes, scarcely saying a word, apparently rapt in musing. Those musings of hers are so profound that you fall under the spell of them; on me, at least, she has the effect of a cloud overcharged with electricity. One day I plied her with questions; I tried with all my might to make her talk; at last I let fall a few rather hasty words; and, well—she burst into tears.

"At other times La Fosseuse is bright and winning, active, merry, and sprightly; she enjoys talking, and the ideas which she expresses are fresh and original. She is however quite unable to apply herself steadily to any kind of work. When she was out in the fields she used to spend whole hours in looking at a flower, in watching the water flow, in gazing at the wonders in the depths of the clear, still river pools, at the picturesque mosaic made up of pebbles and earth and sand, of water plants and green moss, and the brown soil washed down by the stream, a deposit full of soft shades of color, and of hues that contrast strangely with each other.

"When I first came to the district the poor girl was starving. It hurt her pride to accept the bread of others; and it was only when driven to the last extremity of want and suffering that she could bring herself to ask for charity. The feeling that this was a disgrace would often give her energy, and for several days she worked in the fields; but her strength was soon exhausted, and illness obliged her to leave the work that she had begun. She had scarcely recovered when she went to a farm on the outskirts of the town and asked to be taken on to look after the cattle; she did her work well and intelligently, but after a while she left without giving any reason for so doing. The constant toil, day after day, was no doubt too heavy a yoke for one who is all independence and caprice. Then she set herself to look for mushrooms or for truffles, going over to Grenoble to sell them. But the gaudy trifles in the town were very tempting, the few small coins in her hand seemed to be great riches; she would forget her poverty and buy ribbons and finery, without a thought

for to-morrow's bread. But if some other girl here in the town took a fancy to her brass crucifix, her agate heart or her velvet ribbon, she would make them over to her at once, glad to give happiness, for she lives by generous impulses. So La Fosseuse was loved and pitied and despised by turns. Everything in her nature was a cause of suffering to her—her indolence, her kindness of heart, her coquetry; for she is coquettish, dainty, and inquisitive, in short, she is a woman; she is as simple as a child, and, like a child, she is carried away by her tastes and her impressions. If you tell her about some noble deed, she trembles, her color rises, her heart throbs fast, and she sheds tears of joy; if you begin a story about robbers, she turns pale with terror. You could not find a more sincere, open-hearted, and scrupulously loyal nature anywhere; if you were to give a hundred gold pieces into her keeping, she would bury them in some out-of-the-way nook and beg her bread as before."

There was a change in Benassis's tone as he uttered these last words.

"I once determined to put her to the proof," he said, "and I repented of it. It is like espionage to bring a test to bear upon another, is it not? It means that we suspect them at any rate."

Here the doctor paused, as though some inward reflection engrossed him; he was quite unconscious of the embarrassment that his last remark had caused to his companion, who busied himself with disentangling the reins in order to hide his confusion. Benassis soon resumed his talk.

"I should like to find a husband for my Fosseuse. I should be glad to make over one of my farms to some good fellow who would make her happy. And she would be happy. The poor girl would love her children to distraction; for motherhood, which develops the whole of a woman's nature, would give full scope to her overflowing sentiments. She has never cared for any one, however. Yet her impressionable nature is a danger to her. She knows this herself, and when she saw that I recognized it, she

admitted the excitability of her temperament to me. She belongs to the small minority of women whom the slightest contact with others causes to vibrate perilously; so that she must be made to value herself on her discretion and her womanly pride. She is as wild and shy as a swallow! Ah! what a wealth of kindness there is in her! Nature meant her to be a rich woman, she would be so beneficent: for a well-loved woman, she would be so faithful and true. She is only twenty-two years old, and is sinking already beneath the weight of her soul; a victim to highly-strung nerves, to an organization either too delicate or too full of power. A passionate love for a faithless lover would drive her mad, my poor Fosseuse! I have made a study of her temperament, recognized the reality of her prolonged nervous attacks, and of the swift mysterious recurrence of her uplifted moods. I found that they were immediately dependent on atmospheric changes and on the variations of the moon, a fact which I have carefully verified; and since then I have cared for her, as a creature unlike all others, for she is a being whose ailing existence I alone can understand. As I have told you, she is the pet lamb. But you shall see her; this is her cottage."

They had come about one-third of the way up the mountain side. Low bushes grew on either hand along the steep paths which they were ascending at a foot pace. At last, at a turn in one of the paths, Genestas saw La Fosseuse's dwelling, which stood on one of the largest knolls on the mountain. Around it was a green sloping space of lawn about three acres in extent, planted with trees, and surrounded by a wall high enough to serve as a fence, but not so high as to shut out the view of the landscape. Several rivulets that had their source in this garden formed little cascades among the trees. The brick-built cottage with a low roof that projected several feet was a charming detail in the landscape. It consisted of a ground floor and a single story, and stood facing the south. All the windows were in the front of the house, for its small size and lack of depth from back to front made other openings unnecessary. The doors and

shutters were painted green, and the under side of the pent-houses had been lined with deal boards in the German fashion, and painted white. The rustic charm of the whole little dwelling lay in its spotless cleanliness.

Climbing plants and briar roses grew about the house; a great walnut tree had been allowed to remain among the flowering acacias and trees that bore sweet-scented blossoms, and a few weeping willows had been set by the little streams in the garden space. A thick belt of pines and beeches grew behind the house, so that the picturesque little dwelling was brought out into strong relief by the sombre width of background. At that hour of the day, the air was fragrant with the scents from the hillsides and the perfume from La Fosseuse's garden. The sky overhead was clear and serene, but low clouds hung on the horizon, and the far-off peaks had begun to take the deep rose hues that the sunset often brings. At the height which they had reached the whole valley lay before their eyes, from distant Grenoble to the little lake at the foot of the circle of crags by which Genestas had passed on the previous day. Some little distance above the house a line of poplars on the hill indicated the highway that led to Grenoble. Rays of sunlight fell slantwise across the little town which glittered like a diamond, for the soft red light which poured over it like a flood was reflected by all its window-panes. Genestas reined in his horse at the sight, and pointed to the dwellings in the valley, to the new town, and to La Fosseuse's house.

"Since the victory of Wagram, and Napoleon's return to the Tuileries in 1815," he said, with a sigh, "nothing has so stirred me as the sight of all this. I owe this pleasure to you, sir, for you have taught me to see beauty in a landscape."

"Yes," said the doctor, smiling as he spoke, "it is better to build towns than to storm them."

"Oh! sir, how about the taking of Moscow and the surrender of Mantua! Why, you do not really know what that means! Is it not a glory for all of us? You are a good

man, but Napoleon also was a good man. If it had not been for England, you both would have understood each other, and our Emperor would never have fallen. There are no spies here," said the officer, looking around him, "and I can say openly that I love him, now that he is dead! What a ruler! He knew every man when he saw him! He would have made you a Councillor of State, for he was a great administrator himself; even to the point of knowing how many cartridges were left in the men's boxes after an action. Poor man! While you were talking about La Fosseuse, I thought of him, and how he was lying dead in St. Helena! Was that the kind of climate and country to suit *him*, whose seat had been a throne, and who had lived with his feet in the stirrups; *hein?* They say that he used to work in the garden. The deuce! He was not made to plant cabbages. . . . And now we must serve the Bourbons, and loyally, sir; for, after all, France is France, as you were saying yesterday."

Genestas dismounted as he uttered these last words, and mechanically followed the example set by Benassis, who fastened his horse's bridle to a tree.

"Can she be away?" said the doctor, when he did not see La Fosseuse on the threshold. They went into the house, but there was no one in the sitting-room on the ground floor.

"She must have heard the sound of a second horse," said Benassis, with a smile, "and has gone upstairs to put on her cap, or her sash, or some piece of finery."

He left Genestas alone, and went upstairs in search of La Fosseuse. The commandant made a survey of the room. He noticed the pattern of the paper that covered the walls—roses scattered over a gray background, and the straw matting that did duty for a carpet on the floor. The armchair, the table, and the smaller chairs were made of wood from which the bark had not been removed. The room was not without ornament; some flower-stands, as they might be called, made of osiers and wooden hoops, had been filled with moss

and flowers, and the windows were draped by white dimity curtains bordered with a scarlet fringe. There was a mirror above the chimney-piece, where a plain china jar stood between two candlesticks. Some calico lay on the table; shirts, apparently, had been cut out and begun, several pairs of gussets were finished, and a work-basket, scissors, needles, and thread, and all a needle-woman's requirements lay beside them. Everything was as fresh and clean as a shell that the sea has tossed up on the beach. Genestas saw that a kitchen lay on the other side of the passage, and that the staircase was at the further end of it. The upper story, like the ground floor, evidently consisted of two rooms only. "Come, do not be frightened," Benassis was saying to La Fosseuse; "come downstairs!"

Genestas promptly retreated into the sitting-room when he heard these words, and in another moment a slender girl, well and gracefully made, appeared in the doorway. She wore a gown of cambric, covered with narrow pink stripes, and cut low at the throat, so as to display a muslin chemisette. Shyness and timidity had brought the color to a face which had nothing very remarkable about it save a certain flatness of feature which called to mind the Cossack and Russian countenances that since the disasters of 1814 have unfortunately come to be so widely known in France. La Fosseuse was, in fact, very like these men of the North. Her nose turned up at the end, and was sunk in her face, her mouth was wide and her chin small, her hands and arms were red and, like her feet, were of the peasant type, large and strong. Although she had been used to an outdoor life, to exposure to the sun and the scorching summer winds, her complexion had the bleached look of withered grass; but after the first glance this made her face more interesting, and there was such a sweet expression in her blue eyes, so much grace about her movements, and such music in her voice, that little as her features seemed to harmonize with the disposition which Benassis had praised to the commandant, the officer recognized in her the capricious and

ailing creature, condemned to suffering by a nature that had been thwarted in its growth.

La Fosseuse deftly stirred the fire of dry branches and tufts of peat, then sat down in an armchair and took up one of the shirts that she had begun. She sat there under the officer's eyes, half bashful, afraid to look up, and calm to all appearance; but her bodice rose and fell with the rapid breathing that betrayed her nervousness, and it struck Genestas that her figure was very graceful.

"Well, my poor child, is your work going on nicely?" said Benassis, taking up the material intended for the shirts and passing it through his fingers.

La Fosseuse gave the doctor a timid and beseeching glance.

"Do not scold me, sir," she entreated; "I have not touched them to-day, although they were ordered by you, and for people who need them very badly. But the weather has been so fine! I wandered out and picked a quantity of mushrooms and white truffles, and took them over to Jacquotte; she was very much pleased, for some people are coming to dinner. I was so glad that I thought of it; something seemed to tell me to go to look for them."

She began to ply her needle again.

"You have a very pretty house here, mademoiselle," said Genestas, addressing her.

"It is not mine at all, sir," she said, looking at the stranger, and her eyes seemed to grow red and tearful; "it belongs to M. Benassis," and she turned toward the doctor with a gentle expression on her face.

"You know quite well, my child, that you will never have to leave it," he said, as he took her hand in his.

La Fosseuse suddenly rose and left the room.

"Well," said the doctor, addressing the officer, "what do you think of her?"

"There is something strangely touching about her," Genestas answered. "How very nicely you have fitted up this little nest of hers!"

"Bah! a wall-paper at fifteen or twenty sous; it was carefully chosen, but that was all. The furniture is nothing very much either, my basket-maker made it for me; he wanted to show his gratitude; and La Fosseuse made the curtains herself out of a few yards of calico. This little house of hers, and her simple furniture, seem pretty to you, because you come upon them up here on a hillside in a forlorn part of the world where you did not expect to find things clean and tidy. The reason of the prettiness is a kind of harmony between the little house and its surroundings. Nature has set picturesque groups of trees and running streams about it, and has scattered her fairest flowers among the grass, her sweet-scented wild strawberry blossoms, and her lovely violets. . . . Well, what is the matter?" asked Benassis, as La Fosseuse came back to them.

"Oh! nothing, nothing," she answered. "I fancied that one of my chickens was missing, and had not been shut up."

Her remark was disingenuous, but this was only noticed by the doctor, who said in her ear, "You have been crying!"

"Why do you say things like that to me before some one else?" she asked in reply.

"Mademoiselle," said Genestas, "it is a great pity that you live here all by yourself; you ought to have a mate in such a charming cage as this."

"That is true," she said, "but what would you have? I am poor, and I am hard to please. I feel that it would not suit me at all to carry the soup out into the fields, nor to push a handcart; to feel the misery of those whom I should love, and have no power to put an end to it; to carry my children in my arms all day, and patch and repatch a man's rags. The curé tells me that such thoughts as these are not very Christian; I know that myself, but how can I help it? There are days when I would rather eat a morsel of dry bread than cook anything for my dinner. Why would you have me worry some man's life out with my failings? He would perhaps work himself to death to satisfy my whims,

and that would not be right. Pshaw! an unlucky lot has fallen to me, and I ought to bear it by myself."

"And besides, she is a born do-nothing," said Benassis. "We must take my poor Fosseuse as we find her. But all that she has been saying to you simply means that she has never loved as yet," he added, smiling. Then he rose and went out on to the lawn for a moment.

"You must be very fond of M. Benassis?" asked Genestas.

"Oh! yes, sir; and there are plenty of people hereabout who feel as I do—that they would be glad to do anything in the world for him. And yet he who cures other people has some trouble of his own that nothing can cure. You are his friend, perhaps you know what it is? Who could have given pain to such a man, who is the very image of God on earth? I know a great many here who think that the corn grows faster if he has passed by their field in the morning."

"And what do you think yourself?"

"I, sir? When I have seen him," she seemed to hesitate, then she went on, "I am happy all the rest of the day."

She bent her head over her work, and plied her needle with unwonted swiftness.

"Well, has the captain been telling you something about Napoleon?" said the doctor, as he came in again.

"Have you seen the Emperor, sir?" cried La Fosseuse, gazing at the officer's face with eager curiosity.

"*Parbleu!*" said Genestas, "hundreds of times!"

"Oh! how I should like to know something about the army!"

"Perhaps we will come to take a cup of coffee with you to-morrow, and you shall hear 'something about the army,' dear child," said Benassis, who laid his hand on her shoulder and kissed her brow. "She is my daughter, you see!" he added, turning to the commandant; "there is something wanting in the day, somehow, when I have not kissed her forehead."

La Fosseuse held Benassis's hand in a tight clasp as she murmured, "Oh! you are very kind!"

They left the house; but she came after them to see them mount. She waited till Genestas was in the saddle, and then whispered in Benassis's ear, "Tell me who that gentleman is?"

"Aha!" said the doctor, putting a foot in the stirrup, "a husband for you, perhaps."

She stood on the spot where they left her, absorbed in watching their progress down the steep path; and when they came past the end of the garden, they saw her already perched on a little heap of stones, so that she might still keep them in view and give them a last nod of farewell.

"There is something very unusual about that girl, sir," Genestas said to the doctor when they had left the house far behind.

"There is, is there not?" he answered. "Many a time I have said to myself that she will make a charming wife, but I can only love her as a sister or a daughter, and in no other way; my heart is dead."

"Has she any relations?" asked Genestas. "What did her father and mother do?"

"Oh, it is quite a long story," answered Benassis. "Neither her father nor mother nor any of her relations are living. Everything about her down to her name interested me. La Fosseuse was born here in the town. Her father, a laborer from Saint Laurent du Pont, was nicknamed *Le Fosseur*, which is no doubt a contraction of *fossoyeur*, for the office of sexton had been in his family time out of mind. All the sad associations of the graveyard hang about the name. Here, as in some other parts of France, there is an old custom, dating from the times of the Latin civilization, in virtue of which a woman takes her husband's name, with the addition of a feminine termination, and this girl has been called La Fosseuse, after her father.

"The laborer had married the waiting-woman of some countess or other who owns an estate at a distance of a few

leagues. It was a love-match. Here, as in all country districts, love is a very small element in a marriage. The peasant, as a rule, wants a wife who will bear him children, a housewife who will make good soup and take it out to him in the fields, who will spin and make his shirts and mend his clothes. Such a thing had not happened for a long while in a district where a young man not infrequently leaves his betrothed for another girl who is richer by three or four acres of land. The fate of Le Fosseur and his wife was scarcely happy enough to induce our Dauphinois to forsake their calculating habits and practical way of regarding things. La Fosseuse, who was a very pretty woman, died when her daughter was born, and her husband's grief for his loss was so great that he followed her within the year, leaving nothing in the world to his little one except an existence whose continuance was very doubtful—a mere feeble flicker of a life. A charitable neighbor took the care of the baby upon herself, and brought her up till she was nine years old. Then the burden of supporting La Fosseuse became too heavy for the good woman; so at the time of year when travellers are passing along the roads, she sent her charge to beg for her living upon the highways.

"One day the little orphan asked for bread at the countess's chateau, and they kept the child for her mother's sake. She was to be waiting-maid some day to the daughter of the house, and was brought up to this end. Her young mistress was married five years later; but meanwhile the poor little thing was the victim of all the caprices of wealthy people, whose beneficence for the most part is not to be depended upon even while it lasts. They are generous by fits and starts; sometimes patrons, sometimes friends, sometimes masters; in this way they falsify the already false position of the poor children in whom they interest themselves, and trifle with the hearts, the lives, and futures of their protégées, whom they regard very lightly. From the first La Fosseuse became almost a companion to the young heiress; she was taught to read and write, and her future mistress sometimes

amused herself by giving her music lessons. She was treated sometimes as a lady's companion, sometimes as a waiting-maid, and in this way they made an incomplete being of her. She acquired a taste for luxury and for dress, together with manners ill-suited to her real position. She has been roughly schooled by misfortune since then, but the vague feeling that she is destined for a higher lot has not been effaced in her.

"A day came at last, however, a fateful day for the poor girl, when the young countess (who was married by this time) discovered La Fosseuse arrayed in one of her ball dresses, and dancing before a mirror. La Fosseuse was no longer anything but a waiting-maid, and the orphan girl, then sixteen years of age, was dismissed without pity. Her idle ways plunged her once more into poverty; she wandered about begging by the roadside, and working at times as I have told you. Sometimes she thought of drowning herself, sometimes also of giving herself to the first comer; she spent most of her time thinking dark thoughts, lying by the side of a wall in the sun, with her face buried in the grass, and passers by would sometimes throw a few halfpence to her, simply because she asked them for nothing. One whole year she spent in a hospital at Annecy after heavy toil in the harvest field; she had only undertaken the work in the hope that it would kill her, and that so she might die. You should hear her herself when she speaks of her feelings and ideas during this time of her life; her simple confidences are often very curious.

"She came back to the little town at last, just about the time when I decided to take up my abode in it. I wanted to understand the minds of the people beneath my rule; her character struck me, and I made a study of it; then when I became aware of her physical infirmities, I determined to watch over her. Perhaps in time she may grow accustomed to work with her needle, but, whatever happens, I have secured her future."

"She is quite alone up there!" said Genestas.

"No. One of my herdswomen sleeps in the house," the

doctor answered. "You did not see my farm buildings which lie behind the house. They are hidden by the pine-trees. Oh! she is quite safe. Moreover, there are no *mauvais sujets* here in the valley; if any come among us by any chance, I send them into the army, where they make excellent soldiers."

"Poor girl!" said Genestas.

"Oh! the folk round about do not pity her at all," said Benassis; "on the other hand, they think her very lucky; but there is this difference between her and the other women, God has given strength to them and weakness to her, and they do not see that."

The moment that the two horsemen came out upon the road to Grenoble, Benassis stopped with an air of satisfaction; a different view had suddenly opened out before them; he foresaw its effect upon Genestas, and wished to enjoy his surprise. As far as the eye could see, two green walls sixty feet high rose above a road which was rounded like a garden path. The trees had not been cut or trimmed, each one preserved the magnificent palm-branch shape that makes the Lombard poplar one of the grandest of trees; there they stood, a natural monument which a man might well be proud of having reared. The shadow had already reached one side of the road, transforming it into a vast wall of black leaves, but the setting sun shone full upon the other side, which stood out in contrast, for the young leaves at the tips of every branch had been dyed a bright golden hue, and, as the breeze stirred through the waving curtain, it gleamed in the light.

"You must be very happy here!" cried Genestas. "The sight of this must be all pleasure to you."

"The love of Nature is the only love that does not deceive human hopes. There is no disappointment here," said the doctor. "Those poplars are ten years old; have you ever seen any that are better grown than these of mine?"

"God is great!" said the soldier, coming to a stand in the middle of the road, of which he saw neither beginning nor end.

"You do me good," cried Benassis. "It was a pleasure to hear you say over again what I have so often said in the midst of this avenue. There is something holy about this place. Here, we are like two mere specks; and the feeling of our own littleness always brings us into the presence of God."

They rode on slowly and in silence, listening to their horses' hoof-beats; the sound echoed along the green corridor as it might have done beneath the vaulted roof of a cathedral.

"How many things have a power to stir us which town-dwellers do not suspect," said the doctor. "Do you notice the sweet scent given off by the gum of the poplar buds, and the resin of the larches? How delightful it is!"

"Listen!" exclaimed Genestas. "Let us wait a moment."

A distant sound of singing came to their ears.

"Is it a woman or a man, or is it a bird?" asked the commandant in a low voice. "Is it the voice of this wonderful landscape!"

"It is something of all these things," the doctor answered, as he dismounted and fastened his horse to a branch of a poplar tree.

He made a sign to the officer to follow his example and to come with him. They went slowly along a footpath between two hedges of blossoming hawthorn which filled the damp evening air with its delicate fragrance. The sun shone full into the pathway; the light and warmth were very perceptible after the shade thrown by the long wall of poplar trees; the still powerful rays poured a flood of red light over a cottage at the end of the stony track. The ridge of the cottage roof was usually a bright green with its overgrowth of mosses and house-leeks, and the thatch was brown as a chestnut shell, but just now it seemed to be powdered with a golden dust. The cottage itself was scarcely visible through the haze of light; the ruinous wall, the doorway and everything about it was radiant with a fleeting glory and a beauty due to chance, such as is sometimes seen for an

instant in a human face, beneath the influence of a strong emotion that brings warmth and color into it. In a life under the open sky and among the fields, the transient and tender grace of such moments as these draws from us the wish of the apostle who said to Jesus Christ upon the mountain, "Let us build a tabernacle and dwell here."

The wide landscape seemed at that moment to have found a voice whose purity and sweetness equalled its own sweetness and purity, a voice as mournful as the dying light in the west—for a vague reminder of Death is divinely set in the heavens, and the sun above gives the same warning that is given here on earth by the flowers and the bright insects of a day. There is a tinge of sadness about the radiance of sunset, and the melody was sad. It was a song widely known in days of yore, a ballad of love and sorrow that once had served to stir the national hatred of France for England. Beaumarchais, in a later day, had given it back its true poetry by adapting it for the French theatre and putting it into the mouth of a page, who pours out his heart to his stepmother. Just now it was simply the air that rose and fell. There were no words; the plaintive voice of the singer touched and thrilled the soul.

"It is the swan's song," said Benassis. "That voice does not sound twice in a century for human ears. Let us hurry; we must put a stop to the singing! The child is killing himself; it would be cruel to listen to him any longer. Be quiet, Jacques! Come, come, be quiet!" cried the doctor.

The music ceased. Genestas stood motionless and overcome with astonishment. A cloud had drifted across the sun, the landscape and the voice were both mute. Shadow, chillness, and silence had taken the place of the soft glory of the light, the warm breath of the breeze, and the child's singing.

"What makes you disobey me?" asked Benassis. "I shall not bring you any more rice pudding nor snail broth! No more fresh dates and white bread for you! So you want to die and break your poor mother's heart, do you?"

Genestas came into a little yard, which was sufficiently clean and tidily kept, and saw before him a lad of fifteen, who looked as delicate as a woman. His hair was fair but scanty, and the color in his face was so bright that it seemed hardly natural. He rose up slowly from the bench where he was sitting, beneath a thick bush of jessamine and some blossoming lilacs that were running riot, so that he was almost hidden among the leaves.

"You know very well," said the doctor, "that I told you not to talk, not to expose yourself to the chilly evening air, and to go to bed as soon as the sun was set. What put it into your head to sing?"

"*Dame!* M. Benassis, it was so very warm out here, and it is so nice to feel warm! I am always cold. I felt so happy that without thinking I began to try over *Malbrouk s'en va-t-en guerre*, just for fun, and then I began to listen to myself because my voice was something like the sound of the flute your shepherd plays."

"Well, my poor Jacques, this must not happen again; do you hear? Let me have your hand," and the doctor felt his pulse.

The boy's eyes had their usual sweet expression, but just now they shone with a feverish light.

"It is just as I thought, you are covered with perspiration," said Benassis. "Your mother has not come in yet?"

"No, sir."

"Come! go indoors and get into bed."

The young invalid went back into the cottage, followed by Benassis and the officer.

"Just light a candle, Captain Bluteau," said the doctor, who was helping Jacques to take off his rough, tattered clothing.

When Genestas had struck a light, and the interior of the room was visible, he was surprised by the extreme thinness of the child, who seemed to be little more than skin and bone. When the little peasant had been put to bed, Benassis tapped the lad's chest, and listened to the ominous

sounds made in this way by his fingers; then, after some deliberation, he drew back the coverlet over Jacques, stepped back a few paces, folded his arms across his chest, and closely scrutinized his patient.

"How do you feel, my little man?"

"Quite comfortable, sir."

A table, with four spindle legs, stood in the room; the doctor drew it up to the bed, found a tumbler and a phial on the mantel-shelf, and composed a draught, by carefully measuring a few drops of brown liquid from the phial into some water, Genestas holding the light the while.

"Your mother is very late."

"She is coming, sir," said the child; "I can hear her footsteps on the path."

The doctor and the officer looked around them while they waited. At the foot of the bed there was a sort of mattress made of moss, on which, doubtless, the mother was wont to sleep in her clothes, for there were neither sheets nor coverlet. Genestas pointed out this bed to Benassis, who nodded slightly to show that he likewise had already admired this motherly devotion. There was a clatter of sabots in the yard, and the doctor went out.

"You will have to sit up with Jacques to-night, Mother Colas. If he tells you that his breathing is bad, you must let him drink some of the draught that I have poured into the tumbler on the table. Take care not to let him have more than two or three sips at a time; there ought to be enough in the tumbler to last him all through the night. Above all things, do not touch the phial, and change the child's clothing at once. He is perspiring heavily."

"I could not manage to wash his shirts to-day, sir; I had to take the hemp over to Grenoble, as we wanted the money."

"Very well, then, I will send you some shirts."

"Then is he worse, my poor lad?" asked the woman.

"He has been so imprudent as to sing, Mother Colas; and it is not to be expected that any good can come of it; but do not be hard upon him, nor scold him. Do not be down-

hearted about it; and if Jacques complains overmuch, send a neighbor to fetch me. Good-by."

The doctor called to his friend, and they went back along the footpath.

"Is that little peasant consumptive?" asked Genestas.

"*Mon Dieu!* yes," answered Benassis. "Science cannot save him, unless Nature works a miracle. Our professors at the Ecole de Médecine in Paris often used to speak to us of the phenomenon which you have just witnessed. Some maladies of this kind bring about changes in the voice-producing organs that give the sufferer a short-lived power of song that no trained voice can surpass. I have made you spend a melancholy day, sir," said the doctor when he was once more in the saddle. "Suffering and death everywhere, but everywhere also resignation. All these peasant folk take death philosophically; they fall ill, say nothing about it, and take to their beds like dumb animals. But let us say no more about death, and let us quicken our horses' paces a little; we ought to reach the town before nightfall, so that you may see the new quarter."

"Eh! some place is on fire over there," said Genestas, pointing to a spot on the mountain, where a sheaf of flames was rising.

"It is not a dangerous fire. Our lime-burner is heating his kiln, no doubt. It is a newly-started industry, which turns our heather to account."

There was a sudden report of a gun, followed by an involuntary exclamation from Benassis, who said, with an impatient gesture, "If that is Butifer, we shall see which of us two is the stronger."

"The shot came from that quarter," said Genestas, indicating a beech-wood up above them on the mountain side. "Yes, up there; you may trust an old soldier's ear."

"Let us go there at once!" cried Benassis, and he made straight for the little wood, urging his horse at a furious speed across ditches and fields, as if he were riding a steeplechase, in his anxiety to catch the sportsman red-handed.

"The man you are after has made off," shouted Genestas, who could scarcely keep up with him.

Benassis wheeled his horse round sharply, and came back again. The man of whom he was in search soon appeared on the top of a perpendicular crag, a hundred feet above the level of the two horsemen.

"Butifer!" shouted Benassis when he saw that this figure carried a fowling-piece; "come down!"

Butifer recognized the doctor, and replied by a respectful and friendly sign which showed that he had every intention of obeying.

"I can imagine that if a man were driven to it by fear or by some overmastering impulse he might possibly contrive to scramble up to that point among the rocks," said Genestas; "but how will he manage to come down again?"

"I have no anxiety on that score," answered Benassis; "the wild goats must feel envious of that fellow yonder! You will see."

The emergencies of warfare had accustomed the commandant to gauge the real worth of men; he admired the wonderful quickness of Butifer's movements, the sure-footed grace with which the hunter swung himself down the rugged sides of the crag, to the top of which he had so boldly climbed. The strong, slender form of the mountaineer was gracefully poised in every attitude which the precipitous nature of the path compelled him to assume; and so certain did he seem of his power to hold on at need that, if the pinnacle of rock on which he took his stand had been a level floor, he could not have set his foot down upon it more calmly. He carried his fowling-piece as if it had been a light walking-cane. Butifer was a young man of middle height, thin, muscular, and in good training; his beauty was of a masculine order, which impressed Genestas on a closer view.

Evidently he belonged to the class of smugglers who ply their trade without resorting to violent courses, and who only exert patience and craft to defraud the government. His face was manly and sunburned. His eyes, which were bright as

an eagle's, were of a clear yellow color, and his sharply-cut nose with its slight curve at the tip was very much like an eagle's beak. His cheeks were covered with down, his red lips were half open, giving a glimpse of a set of teeth of dazzling whiteness. His beard, mustache, and the reddish whiskers, which he allowed to grow, and which curled naturally, still further heightened the masculine and forbidding expression of his face. Everything about him spoke of strength. He was broad-chested; constant activity had made the muscles of his hands curiously firm and prominent. There was the quick intelligence of a savage about his glances; he looked resolute, fearless, and imperturbable, like a man accustomed to put his life in peril, and whose physical and mental strength had been so often tried by dangers of every kind that he no longer felt any doubts about himself. He wore a blouse that had suffered a good deal from thorns and briars, and he had a pair of leather soles bound to his feet by eel-skin thongs, and a pair of torn and tattered blue linen breeches through which his legs were visible, red, wiry, hard, and muscular as those of a stag.

"There you see the man who once fired a shot at me," Benassis remarked to the commandant in a low voice. "If at this moment I were to signify to him my desire to be rid of any one, he would kill them without scruple.—Butifer!" he went on, addressing the poacher, "I fully believed you to be a man of your word; I pledged mine for you because I had your promise. My promise to the *procureur du roi* at Grenoble was based upon your vow never to go poaching again, and to turn over a new leaf and become a steady, industrious worker. You fired that shot just now, and here you are, on the Comte de Labranchoir's estate! Eh! you miscreant? Suppose his keeper had happened to hear you? It is a lucky thing for you that I shall take no formal cognizance of this offence; if I did, you would come up as an old offender, and of course you have no gun license! I let you keep that gun of yours out of tenderness for your attachment to the weapon."

"It is a beauty," said the commandant, who recognized a duck gun from Saint Etienne.

The smuggler raised his head and looked at Genestas by way of acknowledging the compliment.

"Butifer," continued Benassis, "if your conscience does not reproach you, it ought to do so. If you are going to begin your old tricks again, you will find yourself once more in a park inclosed by four stone walls, and no power on earth will save you from the hulks; you will be a marked man, and your character will be ruined. Bring your gun to me to-night, I will take care of it for you."

Butifer gripped the barrel of his weapon in a convulsive clutch.

"You are quite right, sir," he said; "I have done wrong, I have broken bounds, I am a cur. My gun ought to go to you, but when you take it away from me, you take all that I have in the world. The last shot which my mother's son will fire shall be through my own head. . . . What would you have? I did as you wanted me. I kept quiet all the winter; but the spring came, and the sap rose. I am not used to day labor. It is not in my nature to spend my life in fattening fowls; I cannot stoop about turning over the soil for vegetables, nor flourish a whip and drive a cart, nor scrub down a horse in a stable all my life, so I must die of starvation, I suppose? I am only happy when I am up there," he went on after a pause, pointing to the mountains. "And I have been about among the hills for the past week; I got a sight of a chamois, and I have the chamois there," he said, pointing to the top of the crag; "it is at your service! Dear M. Benassis, leave me my gun. Listen! I will leave the commune, *foi de Butifer!* I will go to the Alps; the chamois-hunters will not say a word; on the contrary, they will receive me with open arms. I shall come to grief at the bottom of some glacier; but, if I am to speak my mind, I would rather live for a couple of years among the heights, where there are no governments, nor excisemen, nor game-keepers, nor *procureurs du roi*, than grovel in a marsh for a

century. You are the only one that I shall be sorry to leave behind; all the rest of them bore me! When you are in the right, at any rate you don't worry one's life out—"

"And how about Louise?" asked Benassis. Butifer paused and turned thoughtful.

"Eh! learn to read and write, my lad," said Genestas; "come and enlist in my regiment, have a horse to ride, and turn carabineer. If they once sound 'to horse' for something like a war, you will find out that Providence made you to live in the midst of cannon, bullets, and battalions, and they will make a general of you."

"Ye-es, if Napoleon was back again," answered Butifer.

"You know our agreement," said the doctor. "At the second infraction of it you undertook to go for a soldier. I give you six months in which to learn to read and write, and then I will find up some young gentleman who wants a substitute."

Butifer looked at the mountains.

"Oh! you shall not go to the Alps," cried Benassis. "A man like you, a man of his word, with plenty of good stuff in him, ought to serve his country and command a brigade, and not come to his end trailing after a chamois. The life that you are leading will take you straight to the convict's prison. After over-fatiguing yourself, you are obliged to take a long rest; and, in the end, you will fall into idle ways that will be the ruin of any notions of orderly existence that you have; you will get into the habit of putting your strength to bad uses, and you will take the law into your own hands. I want to put you, in spite of yourself, into the right path."

"So I am to pine and fret myself to death? I feel suffocated whenever I am in a town. I cannot hold out for more than a day in Grenoble, when I take Louise there—"

"We all have our whims, which we must manage to control, or turn them to account for our neighbor's benefit. But it is late, and I am in a hurry. Come to see me to-morrow, and bring your gun along with you. We will talk this

over, my boy. Good-by. Go and sell your chamois in Grenoble."

The two horsemen went on their way.

"That is what I call a man," said Genestas.

"A man in a bad way," answered Benassis. "But what help is there for it? You heard what he said. Is it not lamentable to see such fine qualities running to waste? If France were invaded by a foreign foe, Butifer at the head of a hundred young fellows would keep a whole division busy in Maurienne for a month; but in a time of peace the only outlets for his energy are those which set the law at defiance. He must wrestle with something; whenever he is not risking his neck he is at odds with society, he lends a helping hand to smugglers. The rogue will cross the Rhone, all by himself, in a little boat, to take shoes over into Savoy; he makes good his retreat, heavy laden as he is, to some inaccessible place high up among the hills, where he stays for two days at a time, living on dry crusts. In short, danger is as welcome to him as sleep would be to anybody else, and by dint of experience he has acquired a relish for extreme sensations that has totally unfitted him for ordinary life. It vexes me that a man like that should take a wrong turn and gradually go to the bad, become a bandit, and die on the gallows. But see, captain, how our village looks from here!"

Genestas obtained a distant view of a wide circular space, planted with trees; a fountain surrounded by poplars stood in the middle of it. Round the inclosure were high banks on which a triple line of trees of different kinds were growing; the first row consisted of acacias, the second of Japanese varnish trees, and some young elms grew on the highest row of all.

"That is where we hold our fair," said Benassis. "That is the beginning of the High Street, by those two handsome houses that I told you about; one belongs to the notary, and the other to the justice of the peace."

They came at that moment into a broad road, fairly

evenly paved with large cobblestones. There were altogether about a hundred new houses on either side of it, and almost every house stood in a garden.

The view of the church with its doorway made a pretty termination to this road. Two more roads had been recently planned out half-way down the course of the first, and many new houses had already been built along them. The town-hall stood opposite the parsonage, in the square by the church. As Benassis went down the road, women and children and men who had just finished their day's work promptly appeared in their doorways to wish him good-evening, the men took off their caps, and the little children danced and shouted about his horse, as if the animal's good-nature were as well known as the kindness of its master. The gladness was undemonstrative; there was the instinctive delicacy of all deep feeling about it, and it had the same pervasive power. At the sight of this welcome it seemed to Genestas that the doctor had been too modest in his description of the affection with which he was regarded by the people of the district. His truly was a sovereignty of the sweetest kind; a right royal sovereignty moreover, for its title was engraven in the hearts of its subjects. However dazzling the rays of glory that surround a man, however great the power that he enjoys, in his inmost soul he soon comes to a just estimate of the sentiments that all external action causes for him. He very soon sees that no change has been wrought in him, that there is nothing new and nothing greater in the exercise of his physical faculties, and discovers his own real nothingness. Kings, even should they rule over the whole world, are condemned to live in a narrow circle like other men. They must even submit to the conditions of their lot, and their happiness depends upon the personal impressions that they receive. But Benassis met with nothing but goodwill and loyalty throughout the district.

III

THE NAPOLEON OF THE PEOPLE

"PRAY COME IN, SIR!" cried Jacquotte. "A pretty time the gentlemen have been waiting for you! It is always the way! You always manage to spoil the dinner for me whenever it ought to be particularly good. Everything is cooked to death by this time—"

"Oh! well, here we are," answered Benassis with a smile.

The two horsemen dismounted, and went off to the salon, where the guests invited by the doctor were assembled.

"Gentlemen," he said, taking Genestas by the hand, "I have the honor of introducing to you M. Bluteau, captain of a regiment of cavalry stationed at Grenoble—an old soldier, who has promised me that he will stay among us for a little while."

Then, turning to Genestas, he presented to him a tall, thin, gray-haired man, dressed in black.

"This gentleman," said Benassis, "is M. Dufau, the justice of the peace of whom I have already spoken to you, and who has so largely contributed to the prosperity of the commune." Then he led his guest up to a pale, slight young man of middle height, who wore spectacles, and was also dressed in black. "And this is M. Tonnelet," he went on, "M. Gravier's son-in-law, and the first notary who came to live in the village."

The doctor next turned to a stout man, who seemed to belong half to the peasant, half to the middle class, the owner of a rough-pimpled but good-humored countenance.

"This is my worthy colleague M. Cambon," he went on, "the timber-merchant, to whom I owe the confidence and goodwill of the people here. He was one of the promoters of the road which you have admired. I have no need to

tell you the profession of this gentleman," Benassis added, turning to the curate. "Here is a man whom no one can help loving."

There was an irresistible attraction in the moral beauty expressed by the curé's countenance which engrossed Genestas's attention. Yet a certain harshness and austerity of outline might make M. Janvier's face seem unpleasing at a first glance. His attitude, and his slight, emaciated frame, showed that he was far from strong physically, but the unchanging serenity of his face bore witness to the profound inward peace of the Christian and to the strength that comes from purity of heart. Heaven seemed to be reflected in his eyes, and the inextinguishable fervor of charity which glowed in his heart appeared to shine from them. The gestures that he made but rarely were simple and natural, his appeared to be a quiet and retiring nature, and there was a modesty and simplicity like that of a young girl about his actions. At first sight he inspired respect and a vague desire to be admitted to his friendship.

"Ah! M. le Maire," he said, bending as though to escape from Benassis's eulogium.

Something in the curé's tones brought a thrill to Genestas's heart, and the two insignificant words uttered by this stranger priest plunged him into musings that were almost devout.

"Gentlemen," said Jacquotte, who came into the middle of the room, and there took her stand, with her hands on her hips, "the soup is on the table."

Invited by Benassis, who summoned each in turn so as to avoid questions of precedence, the doctor's five guests went into the dining-room; and after the curé, in low and quiet tones, had repeated a "Benedicite," they took their places at table. The cloth that covered the table was of that peculiar kind of damask linen invented, in the time of Henri IV., by the brothers Graindorge, the skilful weavers, who gave their name to the heavy fabric so well known to housekeepers. The linen was of dazzling whiteness, and fragrant with

the scent of the thyme that Jacquotte always put into her wash-tubs. The dinner service was of white porcelain, edged with blue, and was in perfect order. The decanters were of the old-fashioned octagonal kind still in use in the provinces, though they have disappeared elsewhere. Grotesque figures had been carved on the horn handles of the knives. These relics of ancient splendor, which, nevertheless, looked almost new, seemed to those who scrutinized them to be in keeping with the kindly and open-hearted nature of the master of the house.

The lid of the soup-tureen drew a momentary glance from Genestas; he noticed that it was surmounted by a group of vegetables in high relief, skilfully colored after the manner of Bernard Palissy, the celebrated sixteenth century craftsman.

There was no lack of character about the group of men thus assembled. The powerful heads of Genestas and Benassis contrasted admirably with M. Janvier's apostolic countenance; and in the same fashion the elderly faces of the justice of the peace and the deputy-mayor brought out the youthfulness of the notary. Society seemed to be represented by these various types. The expression of each one indicated contentment with himself and with the present, and a faith in the future. M. Tonnelet and M. Janvier, who were still young, loved to make forecasts of coming events, for they felt that the future was theirs; while the other guests were fain rather to turn their talk upon the past. All of them faced the things of life seriously, and their opinions seemed to reflect a double tinge of soberness; on the one hand, from the twilight hues of wellnigh forgotten joys that could never more be revived for them; and, on the other, from the gray dawn which gave promise of a glorious day.

"You must have had a very tiring day, sir?" said M. Cambon, addressing the curé.

"Yes, sir," answered M. Janvier, "the poor crétin and Père Pelletier were buried at different hours."

"Now we can pull down all the hovels of the old village,"

Benassis remarked to his deputy. "When the space on which the houses stand has been grubbed up, it will mean at least another acre of meadow land for us; and furthermore, there will be a clear saving to the commune of the hundred francs that it used to cost to keep Chautard the crétin."

"For the next three years we ought to lay out the hundred francs in making a single-span bridge to carry the lower road over the main stream," said M. Cambon. "The townsfolk and the people down the valley have fallen into the way of taking a short cut across that patch of land of Jean François Pastoureau's; before they have done they will cut it up in a way that will do a lot of harm to that poor fellow."

"I am sure that the money could not be put to a better use," said the justice of the peace. "In my opinion the abuse of the right of way is one of the worst nuisances in a country district. One-tenth of the cases that come before the court are caused by unfair easements. The rights of property are infringed in this way almost with impunity in many and many a commune. A respect for law and a respect for property are ideas too often disregarded in France, and it is most important that they should be inculcated. Many people think that there is something dishonorable in assisting the law to take its course. 'Go and be hanged somewhere else,' is a saying which seems to be dictated by an unpraiseworthy generosity of feeling; but at bottom it is nothing but a hypocritical formula—a sort of veil which we throw over our own selfishness. Let us own to it, we lack patriotism! the true patriot is the citizen who is so deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of the laws that he will see them carried out even at his own cost and inconvenience. If you let the criminal go in peace, are you not making yourself answerable for the crimes he will commit?"

"It is all of a piece," said Benassis. "If the mayors kept their roads in better order, there would not be so many footpaths. And if the members of Municipal Councils knew a little better, they would uphold the small landowner

and the mayor when the two combine to oppose the establishment of unfair easements. The fact that chateau, cottage, field, and tree are all equally sacred would then be brought home in every way to the ignorant; they would be made to understand that Right is just the same in all cases, whether the value of the property in question be large or small. But such salutary changes cannot be brought about all at once. They depend almost entirely on the moral condition of the population, which we can never completely reform without the potent aid of the curés. This remark does not apply to you in any way, M. Janvier."

"Nor do I take it to myself," laughed the curé. "Is not my heart set on bringing the teaching of the Catholic religion to co-operate with your plans of administration? For instance, I have often tried, in my pulpit discourses on theft, to imbue the folk of this parish with the very ideas of Right to which you have just given utterance. For truly, God does not estimate theft by the value of the thing stolen, He looks at the thief. That has been the gist of the parables which I have tried to adapt to the comprehension of my parishioners."

"You have succeeded, sir," said Cambon. "I know the change you have brought about in people's ways of looking at things, for I can compare the commune as it is now with the commune as it used to be. There are certainly very few places where the laborers are as careful as ours are about keeping to time in their working hours. The cattle are well looked after; any damage that they do is done by accident. There is no pilfering in the woods, and finally you have made our peasants clearly understand that the leisure of the rich is the reward of a thrifty and hard-working life."

"Well, then," said Genestas, "you ought to be pretty well pleased with your infantry, M. le Curé."

"We cannot expect to find angels anywhere here below, captain," answered the priest. "Wherever there is poverty, there is suffering too; and suffering and poverty are strong compelling forces which have their abuses, just as power

has. When the peasants have a couple of leagues to walk to their work and have to tramp back wearily in the evening, they perhaps see sportsmen taking short cuts over plowed land and pasture so as to be back to dinner a little sooner, and is it to be supposed that they will hesitate to follow the example? And of those who in this way beat out a foot-path such as these gentlemen have just been complaining about, which are the real offenders, the workers or the people who are simply amusing themselves? Both the rich and the poor give us a great deal of trouble in these days. Faith, like power, ought always to descend from the heights above us, in heaven or on earth; and certainly in our times the upper classes have less faith in them than the mass of the people, who have God's promise of heaven hereafter as a reward for evils patiently endured. With due submission to ecclesiastical discipline, and deference to the views of my superiors, I think that for some time to come we should be less exacting as to questions of doctrine, and rather endeavor to revive the sentiment of religion in the hearts of the intermediary classes, who debate over the maxims of Christianity instead of putting them in practice. The philosophism of the rich has set a fatal example to the poor, and has brought about intervals of too long duration when men have faltered in their allegiance to God. Such ascendency as we have over our flocks to-day depends entirely on our personal influence with them; is it not deplorable that the existence of religious belief in a commune should be dependent on the esteem in which a single man is held? When the preservative force of Christianity permeating all classes of society shall have put life into the new order of things, there will be an end of sterile disputes about doctrine. The cult of a religion is its form; societies only exist by forms. You have your standard, we have the cross—"

"I should very much like to know, sir," said Genestas, breaking in upon M. Janvier, "why you forbid these poor folk to dance on Sunday?"

"We do not quarrel with dancing in itself, captain; it is

forbidden because it leads to immorality, which troubles the peace of the countryside and corrupts its manners. Does not the attempt to purify the spirit of the family and to maintain the sanctity of family ties strike at the root of the evil?"

"Some irregularities are always to be found in every district I know," said M. Tonnelet, "but they very seldom occur among us. Perhaps there are peasants who remove their neighbor's landmark without much scruple; or they may cut a few osiers that belong to some one else, if they happen to want some; but these are mere peccadilloes compared with the wrongdoing that goes on among a town population. Moreover, the people in this valley seem to me to be devoutly religious."

"Devout?" queried the curé with a smile; "there is no fear of fanaticism here."

"But," objected Cambon, "if the people all went to mass every morning, sir, and to confession every week, how would the fields be cultivated? And three priests would hardly be enough."

"Work is prayer," said the curé. "Doing one's duty brings a knowledge of the religious principles which are a vital necessity to society."

"How about patriotism?" asked Genestas.

"Patriotism can only inspire a short-lived enthusiasm," the curate answered gravely; "religion gives it permanence. Patriotism consists in a brief impulse of forgetfulness of self and self-interest, while Christianity is a complete system of opposition to the depraved tendencies of mankind."

"And yet, during the wars undertaken by the Revolution, patriotism—"

"Yes, we worked wonders at the time of the Revolution," said Benassis, interrupting Genestas; "but only twenty years later, in 1814, our patriotism was extinct; while, in former times, a religious impulse moved France and Europe to fling themselves upon Asia a dozen times in the course of a century."

"Maybe it is easier for two nations to come to terms when

the strife has arisen out of some question of material interests," said the justice of the peace; "while wars undertaken with the idea of supporting dogmas are bound to be interminable, because the object can never be clearly defined."

"Well, sir, you are not helping any one to fish!" put in Jacquotte, who had removed the soup with Nicolle's assistance. Faithful to her custom, Jacquotte herself always brought in every dish one after another, a plan which had its drawbacks, for it compelled gluttonous folk to over-eat themselves, and the more abstemious, having satisfied their hunger at an early stage, were obliged to leave the best part of the dinner untouched.

"Gentlemen," said the curé, with a glance at the justice of the peace, "how can you allege that religious wars have had no definite aim? Religion in olden times was such a powerful binding force that material interests and religious questions were inseparable. Every soldier, therefore, knew quite well what he was fighting for."

"If there has been so much fighting about religion," said Genestas, "God must have built up the system very perfunctorily. Should not a divine institution impress men at once by the truth that is in it?"

All the guests looked at the curé.

"Gentlemen," said M. Janvier, "religion is something that is felt and that cannot be defined. We cannot know the purpose of the Almighty; we are no judges of the means He employs."

"Then, according to you, we are to believe in all your rigmaroles," said Genestas, with the easy good-humor of a soldier who has never given a thought to these things.

"The Catholic religion, better than any other, resolves men's doubts and fears; but even were it otherwise, I might ask you if you run any risks by believing in its truths."

"None worth speaking of," answered Genestas.

"Good! and what risks do you not run by not believing? But let us talk of the worldly aspect of the matter, which

most appeals to you. The finger of God is visible in human affairs; see how He directs them by the hand of His vicar on earth. How much men have lost by leaving the path traced out for them by Christianity! So few think of reading Church history, that erroneous notions deliberately sown among the people lead them to condemn the Church; yet the Church has been a pattern of perfect government such as men seek to establish to-day. The principle of election made it for a long while a great political power. Except the Catholic Church, there was no single religious institution which was founded upon liberty and equality. Everything was ordered to this end. The father superior, the abbot, the bishop, the general of an order, and the pope were then chosen conscientiously for their fitness for the requirements of the Church. They were the expression of its intelligence, of the thinking-power of the Church, and blind obedience was therefore their due. I will say nothing of the ways in which society has benefited by that power which has created modern nations and has inspired so many poems, so much music, so many cathedrals, statues, and pictures. I will simply call your attention to the fact that your modern systems of popular election, of two chambers, and of juries, all had their origin in provincial and ecumenical councils, and in the episcopate and college of cardinals; but there is this difference—the views of civilization held by our present-day philosophy seem to me to fade away before the sublime and divine conception of Catholic communion, the type of a universal social communion brought about by the word and the fact that are combined in religious dogma. It would be very difficult for any modern political system, however perfect people may think it, to work once more such miracles as were wrought in those ages when the Church was the stay and support of the human intellect."

"Why?" asked Genestas.

"Because, in the first place, if the principle of election is to be the basis of a system, absolute equality among the electors is a first requirement; they ought to be 'equal quan-

tities,' to make use of a mathematical term, and that is a state of things which modern politics will never bring about. Then, great social changes can only be effected by means of some common sentiment so powerful that it brings men into concerted action, while latter-day philosophism has discovered that law is based upon personal interest, which keeps men apart. Men full of the generous spirit that watches with tender care over the trampled rights of the suffering poor were more often found among the nations of past ages than in our generation. The priesthood, also, which sprang from the middle classes, resisted material forces and stood between the people and their enemies. But the territorial possessions of the Church and her temporal power, which seemingly made her position yet stronger, ended by crippling and weakening her action. As a matter of fact, if the priest has possessions and privileges, he at once appears in the light of an oppressor. He is paid by the State, therefore he is an official: if he gives his time, his life, his whole heart, this is a matter of course, and nothing more than he ought to do; the citizens expect and demand his devotion; and the spontaneous kindliness of his nature is dried up. But, let the priest be vowed to poverty, let him turn to his calling of his own free will, let him stay himself on God alone, and have no resource on earth but the hearts of the faithful, and he becomes once more the missionary of America, he takes the rank of an apostle, he has all things under his feet. Indeed, the burden of wealth drags him down, and it is only by renouncing everything that he gains dominion over all men's hearts."

M. Janvier had compelled the attention of every one present. No one spoke; for all the guests were thoughtful. It was something new to hear such words as these in the mouth of a simple curé.

"There is one serious error, M. Janvier, among the truths to which you have given expression," said Benassis. "As you know, I do not like to raise discussions on points of general interest which modern authorities and modern

writers have called in question. In my opinion, a man who has thought out a political system, and who is conscious that he has within him the power of applying it in practical politics, should keep his mind to himself, seize his opportunity and act; but if he dwells in peaceful obscurity as a simple citizen, is it not sheer lunacy to think to bring the great mass over to his opinion by means of individual discussions? For all that, I am about to argue with you, my dear pastor, for I am speaking before sensible men, each of whom is accustomed always to bring his individual light to a common search for the truth. My ideas may seem strange to you, but they are the outcome of much thought caused by the calamities of the last forty years. Universal suffrage, which finds such favor in the sight of those persons who belong to the constitutional opposition, as it is called, was a capital institution in the Church, because (as you yourself have just pointed out, dear pastor) the individuals of whom the Church was composed were all well educated, disciplined by religious feeling, thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the same system, well aware of what they wanted and whither they were going. But modern Liberalism rashly made war upon the prosperous government of the Bourbons, by means of ideas which, should they triumph, would be the ruin of France and of the Liberals themselves. This is well known to the leaders of the Left, who are merely endeavoring to get the power into their own hands. If (which Heaven forbid) the middle classes ranged under the banner of the opposition should succeed in overthrowing those social superiorities which are so repugnant to their vanity, another struggle would follow hard upon their victory. It would not be very long before the middle classes in their turn would be looked upon by the people as a sort of *noblesse;* they would be a sorry kind of *noblesse*, it is true, but their wealth and privileges would seem so much the more hateful in the eyes of the people because they would have a closer vision of these things. I do not say that the nation would come to grief in this struggle, but society would perish anew;

for the day of triumph of a suffering people is always brief, and involves disorders of the worst kind. There would be no truce in a desperate strife arising out of an inherent or acquired difference of opinion among the electors. The less enlightened and more numerous portion would sweep away social inequalities, thanks to a system in which votes are reckoned by count and not by weight. Hence it follows that a government is never more strongly organized, and as a consequence is never more perfect, than when it has been established for the protection of Privilege of the most restricted kind. By Privilege I do not at this moment mean the old abuses by which certain rights were conceded to a few, to the prejudice of the many; no, I am using it to express the social circle of the governing class. The governing class is in some sort the heart of the State. But throughout creation Nature has confined the vital principle within a narrow space, in order to concentrate its power; and so it is with the body politic. I will illustrate this thought of mine by examples. Let us suppose that there are a hundred peers in France, there are only one hundred causes of offence. Abolish the peerage, and all wealthy people will constitute the privileged class; instead of a hundred, you will have ten thousand, instead of removing class distinctions, you have merely widened the mischief. In fact, from the people's point of view, the right to live without working is in itself a privilege. The unproductive consumer is a robber in their eyes. The only work that they understand has palpable results; they set no value on intellectual labor—the kind of labor which is the principal source of wealth to them. So by multiplying causes of offence in this way, you extend the field of battle; the social war would be waged on all points instead of being confined within a limited circle; and when attack and resistance become general, the ruin of a country is imminent. Because the rich will always be fewer in number, the victory will be to the poor as soon as it comes to actual fighting. I will throw the burden of proof on history.

"The institution of Senatorial Privilege enabled the

Roman Republic to conquer the world. The Senate preserved the tradition of authority. But when the *equites* and the *novi homines* had extended the governing class by adding to the numbers of the Patricians, the State came to ruin. In spite of Sylla, and after the time of Julius Cæsar, Tiberius raised it into the Roman Empire; the system was embodied in one man, and all authority was centred in him, a measure which prolonged the magnificent sway of the Roman for several centuries. The Emperor had ceased to dwell in Rome when the Eternal City fell into the hands of barbarians. When the conqueror invaded our country, the Franks who divided the land among themselves invented feudal privilege as a safeguard for property. The hundred or the thousand chiefs who owned the country, established their institutions with a view to defending the rights gained by conquest. The duration of the feudal system was co-existent with the restriction of Privilege. But when the *leudes* (an exact translation of the word *gentlemen*) from five hundred became fifty thousand, there came a revolution. The governing power was too widely diffused; it lacked force and concentration; and they had not reckoned with the two powers, Money and Thought, that had set those free who had been beneath their rule. So the victory over the monarchical system, obtained by the middle classes with a view to extending the number of the privileged class, will produce its natural effect—the people will triumph in turn over the middle classes. If this trouble comes to pass, the indiscriminate right of suffrage bestowed upon the masses will be a dangerous weapon in their hands. The man who votes, criticises. An authority that is called in question is no longer an authority. Can you imagine a society without a governing authority? No, you cannot. Therefore, authority means force, and a basis of just judgment should underlie force. Such are the reasons which have led me to think that the principle of popular election is a most fatal one for modern governments. I think that my attachment to the poor and suffering classes has been sufficiently proved, and that no one will accuse me of bear-

ing any ill-will toward them; but though I admire the sublime patience and resignation with which they tread the path of toil, I must pronounce them to be unfit to take part in the government. The proletariat seem to me to be the minors of a nation, and ought to remain in a condition of tutelage. Therefore, gentlemen, the word *election*, to my thinking, is in a fair way to cause as much mischief as the words *conscience* and *liberty*, which, ill-defined and ill-understood, were flung broadcast among the people, to serve as watchwords of revolt and incitements to destruction. It seems to me to be a right and necessary thing that the masses should be kept in tutelage for the good of society."

"This system of yours runs so clean contrary to everybody's notions nowadays that we have some right to ask your reasons for it," said Gencstas, interrupting the doctor.

"By all means, captain."

"What is this the master is saying?" cried Jacquotte, as she went back to her kitchen. "There he is, the poor dear man, and what is he doing but advising them to crush the people! And they are listening to him—"

"I would never have believed it of M. Benassis," answered Nicolle.

"If I require that the ignorant masses should be governed by a strong hand," the doctor resumed, after a brief pause, "I should desire at the same time that the framework of the social system should be sufficiently yielding and elastic to allow those who have the will and are conscious of their ability to emerge from the crowd, to rise and take their place among the privileged classes. The aim of power of every kind is its own preservation. In order to live, a government, to-day as in the past, must press the strong men of the nation into its service, taking them from every quarter, so as to make them its defenders, and to remove from among the people the men of energy who incite the masses to insurrection. By opening out in this way to the public ambition paths that are at once difficult and easy, easy for strong wills, difficult for weak or imperfect ones, a State averts the

perils of the revolutions caused by the struggles of men of superior powers to rise to their proper level. Our long agony of forty years should have made it clear to any man who has brains that social superiorities are a natural outcome of the order of things. They are of three kinds that cannot be questioned—the superiority of the thinker, the superiority of the politician, the superiority of wealth. Is not that as much as to say, genius, power, and money, or, in yet other words—the cause, the means, and the effect? But suppose a kind of social *tabula rasa*, every social unit perfectly equal, an increase of population everywhere in the same ratio, and give the same amount of land to each family; it would not be long before you would again have all the existing inequalities of fortune; it is glaringly evident, therefore, that there are such things as superiority of fortune, of thinking capacity, and of power, and we must make up our minds to this fact; but the masses will always regard rights that have been most honestly acquired as privileges, and as a wrong done to themselves.

"The *Social Contract* founded upon this basis will be a perpetual pact between those who have and those who have not. And acting on these principles, those who benefit by the laws will be the lawmakers, for they necessarily have the instinct of self-preservation, and foresee their dangers. It is even more to their interest than to the interest of the masses themselves that the latter should be quiet and contented. The happiness of the people should be ready made for the people. If you look at society as a whole from this point of view, you will soon see, as I do, that the privilege of election ought only to be exercised by men who possess wealth, power, or intelligence, and you will likewise see that the action of the deputies they may choose to represent them should be considerably restricted.

"The maker of laws, gentlemen, should be in advance of his age. It is his business to ascertain the tendency of erroneous notions popularly held, to see the exact direction in which the ideas of a nation are tending; he labors for the

future rather than for the present, and for the rising generation rather than for the one that is passing away. But if you call in the masses to make the laws, can they rise above their own level? Nay. The more faithfully an assembly represents the opinions held by the crowd, the less it will know about government, the less lofty its ideas will be, and the more vague and vacillating its policy, for the crowd is and always will be simply a crowd, and this especially with us in France. Law involves submission to regulations; man is naturally opposed to rules and regulations of all kinds, especially if they interfere with his interests; so is it likely that the masses will enact laws that are contrary to their own inclinations? No.

"Very often legislation ought to run counter to the prevailing tendencies of the time. If the law is to be shaped by the prevailing habits of thought and tendencies of a nation, would not that mean that in Spain a direct encouragement would be given to idleness and religious intolerance; in England, to the commercial spirit; in Italy, to the love of the arts that may be the expression of a society, but by which no society can entirely exist; in Germany, feudal class distinctions would be fostered; and here, in France, popular legislation would promote the spirit of frivolity, the sudden craze for an idea, and the readiness to split into factions which has always been our bane.

"What has happened in the forty years since the electors took it upon themselves to make laws for France? We have something like forty thousand laws! A people with forty thousand laws might as well have none at all. Is it likely that five hundred mediocrities (for there are never more than a hundred great minds to do the work of any one century), is it likely that five hundred mediocrities will have the wit to rise to the level of these considerations? Not they! Here is a constant stream of men poured forth from five hundred different places; they will interpret the spirit of the law in divers manners, and there should be a unity of conception in the law.

"But I will go yet further. Sooner or later an assembly of this kind comes to be swayed by one man, and instead of a dynasty of kings, you have a constantly changing and costly succession of prime ministers. There comes a Mirabeau, or a Danton, a Robespierre, or a Napoleon, or proconsuls, or an emperor, and there is an end of deliberations and debates. In fact, it takes a determinate amount of force to raise a given weight; the force may be distributed, and you may have a less or greater number of levers, but it comes to the same thing in the end, the force must be in proportion to the weight. The weight in this case is the ignorant and suffering mass of people who form the lowest stratum of society. The attitude of authority is bound to be repressive, and great concentration of the governing power is needed to neutralize the force of a popular movement. This is the application of the principle that I unfolded when I spoke just now of the way in which the class privileged to govern should be restricted. If this class is composed of men of ability, they will obey this natural law, and compel the country to obey. If you collect a crowd of mediocrities together, sooner or later they will fall under the dominion of a stronger head. A deputy of talent understands the reasons for which a government exists; the mediocre deputy simply comes to terms with force. An assembly either obeys an idea, like the Convention in the time of the Terror; a powerful personality, like the Corps Legislatif under the rule of Napoleon; or falls under the domination of a system or of wealth, as it has done in our own day. The Republican Assembly, that dream of some innocent souls, is an impossibility. Those who would fain bring it to pass are either grossly deluded dupes or would-be tyrants. Do you not think that there is something ludicrous about an Assembly which gravely sits in debate upon the perils of a nation which ought to be roused into immediate action? It is only right of course that the people should elect a body of representatives who will decide questions of supplies and of taxation; this institution has always existed, under the

sway of the most tyrannous ruler no less than under the sceptre of the mildest of princes. Money is not to be taken by force; there are natural limits to taxation, and if they are overstepped, a nation either rises up in revolt, or lays itself down to die. Again, if this elective body, changing from time to time according to the needs and ideas of those whom it represents, should refuse obedience to a bad law in the name of the people, well and good. But to imagine that five hundred men, drawn from every corner of the kingdom, will make a good law! Is it not a dreary joke, for which the people will sooner or later have to pay? They have a change of masters, that is all.

"Authority ought to be given to one man, he alone should have the task of making the laws; and he should be a man who, by force of circumstances, is continually obliged to submit his actions to general approbation. But the only restraints that can be brought to bear upon the exercise of power, be it the power of the one, of the many, or of the multitude, are to be found in the religious institutions of a country. Religion forms the only adequate safeguard against the abuse of supreme power. When a nation ceases to believe in religion, it becomes ungovernable in consequence, and its prince perforce becomes a tyrant. The Chambers that occupy an intermediate place between rulers and their subjects are powerless to prevent these results, and can only mitigate them to a very slight extent; Assemblies, as I have said before, are bound to become the accomplices of tyranny on the one hand, or of insurrection on the other. My own leanings are toward a government by one man; but though it is good, it cannot be absolutely good, for the results of every policy will always depend upon the condition and the beliefs of the nation. If a nation is in its dotage, if it has been corrupted to the core by philosophism and the spirit of discussion, it is on the highroad to despotism, from which no form of free government will save it. And, at the same time, a righteous people will nearly always find liberty even under a despotic rule. All this goes to show the neces-

sity for restricting the right of election within very narrow limits, the necessity for a strong government, the necessity for a powerful religion which makes the rich man the friend of the poor, and enjoins upon the poor an absolute submission to their lot. It is, in fact, really imperative that the Assemblies should be deprived of all direct legislative power, and should confine themselves to the registration of laws and to questions of taxation.

"I know that different ideas from these exist in many minds. To-day, as in past ages, there are enthusiasts who seek for perfection, and who would like to have society better ordered than it is at present. But innovations which tend to bring about a kind of social topsy-turvydom ought only to be undertaken by general consent. Let the innovators have patience. When I remember how long it has taken Christianity to establish itself; how many centuries it has taken to bring about a purely moral revolution which surely ought to have been accomplished peacefully, the thought of the horrors of a revolution, in which material interests are concerned, makes me shudder, and I am for maintaining existing institutions. 'Each shall have his own thought,' is the dictum of Christianity; 'Each man shall have his own field,' says modern law; and in this, modern law is in harmony with Christianity. Each shall have his own thought; that is a consecration of the rights of intelligence; and each shall have his own field, is a consecration of the right to property that has been acquired by toil. Hence our society. Nature has based human life upon the instinct of self-preservation, and social life is founded upon personal interest. Such ideas as these are, to my thinking, the very rudiments of politics. Religion keeps these two selfish sentiments in subordination by the thought of a future life; and in this way the harshness of the conflict of interests has been somewhat softened. God has mitigated the sufferings that arise from social friction by a religious sentiment which raises self-forgetfulness into a virtue; just as He has moderated the friction of the mechanism of

the universe by laws which we do not know. Christianity bids the poor bear patiently with the rich, and commands the rich to lighten the burdens of the poor; these few words, to my mind, contain the essence of all laws, human and divine!"

"I am no statesman," said the notary; "I see in a ruler a liquidator of society which should always remain in liquidation; he should hand over to his successor the exact value of the assets which he received."

"I am no statesman either," said Benassis, hastily interrupting the notary. "It takes nothing but a little commonsense to better the lot of a commune, of a canton, or of an even wider district; a department calls for some administrative talent, but all these four spheres of action are comparatively limited, the outlook is not too wide for ordinary powers of vision, and there is a visible connection between their interests and the general progress made by the State.

"But in yet higher regions, everything is on a larger scale, the horizon widens, and from the standpoint where he is placed, the statesman ought to grasp the whole situation. It is only necessary to consider liabilities due ten years hence, in order to bring about a great deal of good in the case of the department, the district, the canton, or the commune; but when it is a question of the destinies of a nation, a statesman must foresee a more distant future and the course that events are likely to take for the next hundred years. The genius of a Colbert or of a Sully avails nothing, unless it is supported by the energetic will that makes a Napoleon or a Cromwell. A great minister, gentlemen, is a great thought written at large over all the years of a century of prosperity and splendor for which he has prepared the way. Steadfast perseverance is the virtue of which he stands most in need; and in all human affairs does not steadfast perseverance indicate a power of the very highest order? We have had for some time past too many men who think only of the ministry instead of the nation, so that we cannot but admire the real statesman as the vastest human Poetry.

Ever to look beyond the present moment, to foresee the ways of Destiny, to care so little for power that he only retains it because he is conscious of his usefulness, while he does not over-estimate his strength; ever to lay aside all personal feeling and low ambitions, so that he may always be master of his faculties, and foresee, will, and act without ceasing; to compel himself to be just and impartial, to keep order on a large scale, to silence his heart that he may be guided by his intellect alone, to be neither apprehensive nor sanguine, neither suspicious nor confiding, neither grateful nor ungrateful, never to be unprepared for an event, nor taken at unawares by an idea; to live, in fact, with the requirements of the masses ever in his mind, to spread the protecting wings of his thought above them, to sway them by the thunder of his voice and the keenness of his glance; seeing all the while not the details of affairs, but the great issues at stake, is not that to be something more than a mere man? Therefore the names of the great and noble fathers of nations cannot but be household words forever."

There was silence for a moment, during which the guests looked at one another.

"Gentlemen, you have not said a word about the army!" cried Genestas. "A military organization seems to me to be the real type on which all good civil society should be modelled; the Sword is the guardian of a nation."

The justice of the peace laughed softly.

"Captain," he said, "an old lawyer once said that empires began with the sword and ended with the desk; we have reached the desk stage by this time."

"And now that we have settled the fate of the world, gentlemen, let us change the subject. Come, captain, a glass of Hermitage," cried the doctor, laughing.

"Two, rather than one," said Genestas, holding out his glass. "I mean to drink them both to your health—to a man who does honor to the species."

"And who is dear to all of us," said the curé in gentle tones.

"Do you mean to force me into the sin of pride, M. Janvier?"

"M. le Curé has only said in a low voice what all the canton says aloud," said Cambon.

"Gentlemen, I propose that we take a walk to the parsonage by moonlight, and see M. Janvier home."

"Let us start," said the guests, and they prepared to accompany the curé.

"Shall we go to the barn?" said the doctor, laying a hand on Genestas's arm. They had taken leave of the curé and the other guests. "You will hear them talking about Napoleon, Captain Bluteau. Goguelat, the postman, is there, and there are several of his cronies who are sure to draw him out on the subject of the idol of the people. Nicolle, my stableman, has set a ladder so that we can climb up on to the hay; there is a place from which we can look down on the whole scene. Come along, an up-sitting is something worth seeing, believe me. It will not be the first time that I have hidden in the hay to overhear a soldier's tales or the stories that peasants tell among themselves. We must be careful to keep out of sight though, as these good folk turn shy and put on company manners as soon as they see a stranger."

"Eh! my dear sir," said Genestas, "have I not often pretended to be asleep so as to hear my troopers talking out on bivouac? My word, I once heard a droll yarn reeled off by an old quartermaster for some conscripts who were afraid of war; I never laughed so heartily in any theatre in Paris. He was telling them about the Retreat from Moscow; he told them that the army had nothing but the clothes they stood up in, that their wine was iced, that the dead stood stock-still in the road just where they were, that they had seen White Russia, and that they currycombed the horses there with their teeth, that those who were fond of skating had fine times of it, and people who had a fancy for savory ices had as much as they could put away, that the women were generally poor company, but that the only thing they could really complain of was the want of hot water for shaving.

In fact, he told them such a pack of absurdities that even an old quartermaster who had lost his nose with a frost-bite, so that they had dubbed him *Nezrestant*, was fain to laugh."

"Hush!" said Benassis, "here we are. I will go first; follow after me."

Both of them scaled the ladder and hid themselves in the hay, in a place from whence they could have a good view of the party below, who had not heard a sound overhead. Little groups of women were clustered about three or four candles. Some of them sewed, others were spinning, a good few of them were doing nothing, and sat with their heads strained forward, and their eyes fixed on an old peasant who was telling a story. The men were standing about for the most part, or lying at full length on the trusses of hay. Every group was absolutely silent. Their faces were barely visible by the flickering gleams of the candles by which the women were working, although each candle was surrounded by a glass globe filled with water, in order to concentrate the light. The thick darkness and shadow that filled the roof and all the upper part of the barn seemed still further to diminish the light that fell here and there upon the workers' heads with such picturesque effects of light and shade. Here, it shone full upon the bright wondering eyes and brown forehead of a little peasant maiden; and there the straggling beams brought out the outlines of the rugged brows of some of the older men, throwing up their figures in sharp relief against the dark background, and giving a fantastic appearance to their worn and weather-stained garb. The attentive attitude of all these people and the expression on all their faces showed that they had given themselves up entirely to the pleasure of listening, and that the narrator's sway was absolute. It was a curious scene. The immense influence that poetry exerts over every mind was plainly to be seen. For is not the peasant who demands that the tale of wonder should be simple, and that the impossible should be wellnigh credible, a lover of poetry of the purest kind?

"She did not like the look of the house at all," the peasant was saying as the two new-comers took their places where they could overhear him; "but the poor little hunchback was so tired out with carrying her bundle of hemp to market that she went in; besides, the night had come, and she could go no further. She only asked to be allowed to sleep there, and ate nothing but a crust of bread that she took from her wallet. And inasmuch as the woman who kept house for the brigands knew nothing about what they had planned to do that night, she let the old woman into the house, and sent her upstairs without a light. Our hunchback throws herself down on a rickety truckle bed, says her prayers, thinks about her hemp, and is dropping off to sleep. But before she is fairly asleep, she hears a noise, and in walk two men carrying a lantern, and each man had a knife in his hand. Then fear came upon her; for in those times, look you, they used to make pâtés of human flesh for the seigneurs, who were very fond of them. But the old woman plucked up heart again, for she was so thoroughly shrivelled and wrinkled that she thought they would think her a poorish sort of diet. The two men went past the hunchback and walked up to a bed that there was in the great room, and in which they had put the gentleman with the big portmanteau, the one that passed for a *negromancer*. The taller man holds up the lantern and takes the gentleman by the feet, and the short one, that had pretended to be drunk, clutches hold of his head and cuts his throat, clean, with one stroke, swish! Then they leave the head and body lying in its own blood up there, steal the portmanteau, and go downstairs with it. Here is our woman in a nice fix! First of all she thinks of slipping out, before any one can suspect it, not knowing that Providence had brought her there to glorify God and to bring down punishment on the murderers. She was in a great fright, and when one is frightened one thinks of nothing else. But the woman of the house had asked the two brigands about the hunchback, and that had alarmed them. So back they come, creeping softly up the wooden

staircase. The poor hunchback curls up in a ball with fright, and she hears them talking about her in whispers.

"'Kill her, I tell you.'

"'No need to kill her.'

"'Kill her!'

"'No!'

"Then they come in. The woman, who was no fool, shuts her eyes and pretends to be asleep. She sets to work to sleep like a child, with her hand on her heart, and takes to breathing like a cherub. The man opens the lantern and shines the light straight into the eyes of the sleeping old woman—she does not move an eyelash, she is in such a terror for her neck.

"'She is sleeping like a log; you can see that quite well,' so says the tall one.

"'Old women are so cunning!' answers the short man. 'I will kill her. We shall feel easier in our minds. Besides, we will salt her down to feed the pigs.'

"The old woman hears all this talk, but she does not stir.

"'Oh! it is all right, she is asleep,' says the short ruffian, when he saw that the hunchback had not stirred.

"That is how the old woman saved her life. And she may be fairly called courageous; for it is a fact that there are not many girls here who could have breathed like cherubs while they heard that talk going on about the pigs. Well, the two brigands set to work to lift up the dead man; they wrap him round in the sheets and chuck him out into the little yard; and the old woman hears the pigs scampering up to eat him, and grunting, *Hon! hon!*

"So when morning comes," the narrator resumed after a pause, "the woman gets up and goes down, paying a couple of sous for her bed. She takes up her wallet, goes on just as if nothing had happened, asks for the news of the countryside, and gets away in peace. She wants to run. Running is quite out of the question, her legs fail her for fright; and lucky it was for her that she could not run, for this reason. She had barely gone half a quarter of a league before she

sees one of the brigands coming after her, just out of craftiness to make quite sure that she had seen nothing. She guesses this, and sits herself down on a bowlder.

"'What is the matter, good woman?' asks the short one, for it was the shorter one and the wickeder of the two who was dogging her.

"'Oh! master,' says she, 'my wallet is so heavy, and I am so tired, that I badly want some good man to give me his arm' (sly thing, only listen to her!) 'if I am to get back to my poor home.'

"Thereupon the brigand offers to go along with her, and she accepts his offer. The fellow takes hold of her arm to see if she is afraid. Not she! She does not tremble a bit, and walks quietly along. So there they are, chatting away as nicely as possible, all about farming, and the way to grow hemp, till they come to the outskirts of the town, where the hunchback lived, and the brigand made off for fear of meeting some of the sheriff's people. The woman reached her house at midday, and waited there till her husband came home; she thought and thought over all that had happened on her journey and during the night. The hemp-grower came home in the evening. He was hungry; something must be got ready for him to eat. So while she greases her frying-pan, and gets ready to fry something for him, she tells him how she sold her hemp, and gabbles away as females do, but not a word does she say about the pigs, nor about the gentleman who was murdered and robbed and eaten. She holds her frying-pan in the flames so as to clean it, draws it out again to give it a wipe, and finds it full of blood.

"'What have you been putting into it?" says she to her man.

"'Nothing,' says he.

"She thinks it must have been a nonsensical piece of woman's fancy, and puts her frying-pan into the fire again. . . . *Pouf!* A head comes tumbling down the chimney!

"'Oh! look! It is nothing more nor less than the dead

man's head,' says the old woman. 'How he stares at me! What does he want!'

"'*You must avenge me!*' says a voice.

"'What an idiot you are!' said the hemp-grower. 'Always seeing something or other that has no sort of sense about it! Just you all over.'

"He takes up the head, which snaps at his finger, and pitches it out into the yard.

"'Get on with my omelet,' he says, 'and do not bother yourself about that. 'Tis a cat.'

"'A cat!' says she; 'it was as round as a ball.'

"She puts back her frying-pan on the fire. . . . *Pouf!* Down comes a leg this time, and they go through the whole story again. The man was no more astonished at the foot than he had been at the head; he snatched up the leg and threw it out at the door. Before they had finished, the other leg, both arms, the body, the whole murdered traveller, in fact, came down piecemeal. No omelet all this time! The old hemp-seller grew very hungry indeed.

"'By my salvation!' said he, 'when once my omelet is made we will see about satisfying that man yonder.'

"'So you admit, now, that it was a man?' said the hunchback wife. 'What made you say that it was not a head a minute ago, you great worry?'

"The woman breaks the eggs, fries the omelet, and dishes it up without any more grumbling; somehow this squabble began to make her feel very uncomfortable. Her husband sits down and begins to eat. The hunchback was frightened, and said that she was not hungry.

"'Tap! tap!' There was a stranger rapping at the door.

"'Who is there?'

"'The man that died yesterday!'

"'Come in,' answers the hemp-grower.

"So the traveller comes in, sits himself down on a three-legged stool, and says: 'Are you mindful of God, who gives eternal peace to those who confess His Name? Woman! You saw me done to death, and you have said nothing! I

have been eaten by the pigs! The pigs do not enter Paradise, and therefore I, a Christian man, shall go down into hell, all because a woman forsooth will not speak, a thing that has never been known before. You must deliver me,' and so on, and so on.

"The woman, who was more and more frightened every minute, cleaned her frying-pan, put on her Sunday clothes, went to the justice, and told him about the crime, which was brought to light, and the robbers were broken on the wheel in proper style on the Market Place. This good work accomplished, the woman and her husband always had the finest hemp you ever set eyes on. Then, which pleased them still better, they had something that they had wished for for a long time, to wit, a man-child, who in course of time became a great lord of the king's.

"That is the true story of 'The Courageous Hunchback Woman.'"

"I do not like stories of that sort; they make me dream at night," said La Fosseuse. "Napoleon's adventures are much nicer, I think."

"Quite true," said the keeper. "Come now, M. Goguelat, tell us about the Emperor."

"The evening is too far gone," said the postman, "and I do not care about cutting short the story of a victory."

"Never mind, let us hear about it all the same! We know the stories, for we have heard you tell them many a time; but it is always a pleasure to hear them."

"Tell us about the Emperor!" cried several voices at once.

"You will have it?" answered Goguelat. "Very good, but you will see that there is no sense in the story when it is gone through at a gallop. I would rather tell you all about a single battle. Shall it be Champ-Aubert, where we ran out of cartridges, and furbished them just the same with the bayonet?"

"No, the Emperor! the Emperor!"

The old infantryman got up from his truss of hay and

glanced round about on those assembled, with the peculiar sombre expression in which may be read all the miseries, adventures, and hardships of an old soldier's career. He took his coat by the two skirts in front, and raised them, as if it were a question of once more packing up the knapsack in which his kit, his shoes, and all he had in the world used to be stowed; for a moment he stood leaning all his weight on his left foot, then he swung the right foot forward, and yielded with a good grace to the wishes of his audience. He swept his gray hair to one side, so as to leave his forehead bare, and flung back his head and gazed upward, as if to raise himself to the lofty height of the gigantic story that he was about to tell.

"Napoleon, you see, my friends, was born in Corsica, which is a French island warmed by the Italian sun; it is like a furnace there, everything is scorched up, and they keep on killing each other from father to son for generations all about nothing at all—'tis a notion they have. To begin at the beginning, there was something extraordinary about the thing from the first; it occurred to his mother, who was the handsomest woman of her time, and a shrewd soul, to dedicate him to God, so that he should escape all the dangers of infancy and of his after life; for she had dreamed that the world was on fire on the day he was born. It was a prophecy! So she asked God to protect him, on condition that Napoleon should re-establish His holy religion, which had been thrown to the ground just then. That was the agreement; we shall see what came of it.

"Now, do you follow me carefully, and tell me whether what you are about to hear is natural.

"It is certain sure that only a man who had had imagination enough to make a mysterious compact would be capable of going further than anybody else, and of passing through volleys of grapeshot and showers of bullets which carried us off like flies, but which had a respect for his head. I myself had particular proof of that at Eylau. I see him yet; he climbs a hillock, takes his field-glass, looks along our lines,

and says, 'That is going on all right.' One of your deep fellows, with a bunch of feathers in his cap, used to plague him a good deal from all accounts, following him about everywhere, even when he was getting his meals. This fellow wants to do something clever, so as soon as the Emperor goes away he takes his place. Oh! swept away in a moment! And that is the last of the bunch of feathers! You understand quite clearly that Napoleon had undertaken to keep his secret to himself. That is why those who accompanied him, and even his especial friends, used to drop like nuts: Duroc, Bessières, Lannes—men as strong as bars of steel, which he cast into shape for his own ends. And here is a final proof that he was the child of God, created to be the soldier's father; for no one ever saw him as a lieutenant or a captain. He is a commandant straight off! Ah! yes, indeed! He did not look more than four-and-twenty, but he was an old general ever since the taking of Toulon, when he made a beginning by showing the rest that they knew nothing about handling cannon. Next thing he does, he tumbles upon us. A little slip of a general-in-chief of the army of Italy, which had neither bread nor ammunition nor shoes nor clothes—a wretched army as naked as a worm.

"'Friends,' he said, 'here we all are together. Now, get it well into your pates that in a fortnight's time from now you will be the victors, and dressed in new clothes; you shall all have greatcoats, strong gaiters, and famous pairs of shoes; but, my children, you will have to march on Milan to take them, where all these things are.'

"So they marched. The French, crushed as flat as a pancake, held up their heads again. There were thirty thousand of us tatterdemalions against eighty thousand swaggerers of Germans—fine tall men and well equipped; I can see them yet. Then Napoleon, who was only Bonaparte in those days, breathed goodness knows what into us, and on we marched night and day. We rap their knuckles at Montenotte; we hurry on to thrash them at Rivoli, Lodi, Arcola, and Millesimo, and we never let them go. The army came

to have a liking for winning battles. Then Napoleon hems them in on all sides, these German generals did not know where to hide themselves so as to have a little peace and comfort; he drubs them soundly, cribs ten thousand of their men at a time by surrounding them with fifteen hundred Frenchmen, whom he makes to spring up after his fashion, and at last he takes their cannon, victuals, money, ammunition, and everything they have that is worth taking; he pitches them into the water, beats them on the mountains, snaps at them in the air, gobbles them up on the earth, and thrashes them everywhere.

"There are the troops in full feather again! For, look you, the Emperor (who, for that matter, was a wit) soon sent for the inhabitant, and told him that he had come there to deliver him. Whereupon the civilian finds us free quarters and makes much of us, so do the women, who showed great discernment. To come to a final end; in Ventose, '96, which was at that time what the month of March is now, we had been driven up into a corner of the Pays des Marmottes; but after the campaign, lo and behold! we were the masters of Italy, just as Napoleon had prophesied. And in the month of March following, in one year and in two campaigns, he brings us within sight of Vienna; we had made a clean sweep of them. We had gobbled down three armies one after another, and taken the conceit out of four Austrian generals; one of them, an old man who had white hair, had been roasted like a rat in the straw before Mantua. The kings were suing for mercy on their knees. Peace had been won. Could a mere mortal have done that? No. God helped him, that is certain. He distributed himself about like the five loaves in the Gospel, commanded on the battlefield all day, and drew up his plans at night. The sentries always saw him coming and going; he neither ate nor slept. Therefore, recognizing these prodigies, the soldier adopts him for his father. But, forward!

"The other folk there in Paris, seeing all this, say among themselves—'Here is a pilgrim who appears to take his in-

structions from Heaven above; he is uncommonly likely to lay a hand on France. We must let him loose on Asia or America, and that, perhaps, will keep him quiet.'

"The same thing was decreed for him as for Jesus Christ; for, as a matter of fact, they give him orders to go on duty down in Egypt. See his resemblance to the Son of God! That is not all, though. He calls all his fire-eaters about him, all those into whom he had more particularly put the devil, and talks to them in this way—'My friends, for the time being they are giving us Egypt to stop our mouths. But we will swallow down Egypt in a brace of shakes, just as we swallowed Italy, and private soldiers shall be princes, and shall have broad lands of their own. Forward!'

" 'Forward, lads!' cry the sergeants.

"So we come to Toulon on the way to Egypt. Whereupon the English put to sea with all their fleet. But when we are on board, Napoleon says to us—'They will not see us: and it is right and proper that you should know henceforward that your general has a star in the sky that guides us and watches over us!'

"So said, so done. As we sailed over the sea we took Malta, by way of an orange to quench his thirst for victory, for he was a man who must always be doing something. There we are in Egypt. Well and good. Different orders. The Egyptians, look you, are men who, ever since the world has been the world, have been in the habit of having giants to reign over them, and armies like swarms of ants; because it is a country full of genii and crocodiles, where they have built up pyramids as big as our mountains; the fancy took them to stow their kings under the pyramids, so as to keep them fresh, a thing which mightily pleases them all round out there. Whereupon, as we landed, the Little Corporal said to us—'My children, the country which you are about to conquer worships a lot of idols which you must respect, because the Frenchman ought to be on good terms with all the world, and fight people without giving annoyance. Get

it well into your heads to let everything alone at first; for we shall have it all by and by! And forward!'

"So far, so good. But all those people had heard a prophecy of Napoleon, under the name of *Kebir Bonaberdis*, a word which in their lingo means, 'The sultan fires a shot,' and they feared him like the devil. So the Grand Turk, Asia, and Africa have recourse to magic, and they send a demon against us, named the Mahdi, who it was thought had come down from heaven on a white charger which, like its master, was bullet-proof, and the pair of them lived on the air of that part of the world. There are people who have seen them, but for my part I cannot give you any certain information about them. They were the divinities of Arabia and of the Mamelukes who wished their troopers to believe that the Mahdi had the power of preventing them from dying in battle. They gave out that he was an angel sent down to wage war on Napoleon, and to get back Solomon's Seal, part of their paraphernalia which they pretended our general had stolen. You will readily understand that we made them cry *peccavi* all the same.

"Ah, just tell me now how they came to know about that compact of Napoleon's? Was that natural?

"They took it into their heads for certain that he commanded the genii, and that he went from place to place like a bird in the twinkling of an eye; and it is a fact that he was everywhere. At length it came about that he carried off a queen of theirs. She was the private property of a Mameluke, who, although he had several more of them, flatly refused to strike a bargain, though 'the other' offered all his treasures for her and diamonds as big as pigeon's eggs. When things had come to that pass, they could not well be settled without a good deal of fighting; and there was fighting enough for everybody and no mistake about it.

"Then we are drawn up before Alexandria, and again at Gizeh, and before the Pyramids. We had to march over the sands and in the sun; people whose eyes dazzled used to see water that they could not drink and shade that made them

fume. But we made short work of the Mamelukes as usual, and everything goes down before the voice of Napoleon, who seizes Upper and Lower Egypt, and Arabia, far and wide, till we came to the capitals of kingdoms which no longer existed, where there were thousands and thousands of statues of all the devils in creation, all done to the life, and another curious thing too, any quantity of lizards. A confounded country where any one could have as many acres of land as he wished for as little as he pleased.

"While he was busy inland, where he meant to carry out some wonderful ideas of his, the English burn his fleet for him in Aboukir Bay, for they never could do enough to annoy us. But Napoleon, who was respected East and West, and called 'My Son' by the Pope, and 'My dear Father' by Mahomet's cousin, makes up his mind to have his revenge on England, and to take India in exchange for his fleet. He set out to lead us into Asia, by way of the Red Sea, through a country where there were palaces for halting-places, and nothing but gold and diamonds to pay the troops with, when the Mahdi comes to an understanding with the Plague, and sends it among us to make a break in our victories. Halt! Then every man files off to that parade from which no one comes back on his two feet. The dying soldier cannot take Acre, into which he forces an entrance three times with a warrior's impetuous enthusiasm; the Plague was too strong for us; there was not even time to say 'Your servant, sir!' to the Plague. Every man was down with it. Napoleon alone was as fresh as a rose; the whole army saw him drinking in the Plague without its doing him any harm whatever.

"There now, my friends, was that natural, do you think?

"The Mamelukes, knowing that we were all on the sick-list, want to stop our road; but it was no use trying that nonsense with Napoleon. So he spoke to his familiars, who had tougher skins than the rest—'Go and clear the road for me.'

"Junot, who was his devoted friend, and a first-class

fighter, only takes a thousand men, and makes a clean sweep of the Pacha's army, which had the impudence to bar our way. Thereupon back we come to Cairo, our headquarters, and now for another story.

"Napoleon being out of the country, France allowed the people in Paris to worry the life out of her. They kept back the soldiers' pay and all their linen and clothing, left them to starve, and expected them to lay down law to the universe, without taking any further trouble in the matter. They were idiots of the kind that amuse themselves with chattering instead of setting themselves to knead the dough. So our armies were defeated, France could not keep her frontiers; The Man was not there. I say The Man, look you, because that was how they called him; but it was stuff and nonsense, for he had a star of his own and all his other peculiarities, it was the rest of us that were mere men. He hears this history of France after his famous battle of Aboukir, where with a single division he routed the grand army of the Turks, twenty-five thousand strong, and jostled more than half of them into the sea, rrrah! without losing more than three hundred of his own men. That was his last thunderclap in Egypt. He said to himself, seeing that all was lost down there, 'I know that I am the savior of France, and to France I must go.'

"But you must clearly understand that the army did not know of his departure; for if they had, they would have kept him there by force to make him Emperor of the East. So there we all are without him, and in low spirits, for he was the life of us. He leaves Kléber in command, a great watchdog who passed in his checks at Cairo, murdered by an Egyptian whom they put to death by spiking him with a bayonet, which is their way of guillotining people out there; but he suffered so much that a soldier took pity on the scoundrel and handed his flask to him; and the Egyptian turned up his eyes then and there with all the pleasure in life. But there is not much fun for us about this little affair. Napoleon steps aboard of a little cockleshell, a mere nothing

of a skiff, called the 'Fortune,' and in the twinkling of an eye, and in the teeth of the English, who were blockading the place with vessels of the line and cruisers and everything that carries canvas, he lands in France, for he always had the faculty of taking the sea at a stride. Was that natural? Bah! as soon as he is landed at Fréjus, it is as good as saying that he has set foot in Paris. Everybody there worships him; but he calls the Government together.

"'What have you done to my children, the soldiers?' he says to the lawyers. 'You are a set of good-for-nothings who make fools of other people, and feather your own nests at the expense of France. It will not do. I speak in the name of every one who is discontented.'

"Thereupon they want to put him off and to get rid of him; but not a bit of it! He locks them up in the barracks where they used to argufy and makes them jump out of the windows. Then he makes them follow in his train, and they all become as mute as fishes and supple as tobacco pouches. So he becomes Consul at a blow. He was not the man to doubt the existence of the Supreme Being; he kept his word with Providence, who had kept His promise in earnest; he sets up religion again, and gives back the churches, and they ring the bells for God and Napoleon. So every one is satisfied: *primo*, the priests with whom he allows no one to meddle; *segondo*, the merchant folk who carry on their trades without fear of the *rapiamus* of the law that had pressed too heavily on them; *tertio*, the nobles; for people had fallen into an unfortunate habit of putting them to death, and he puts a stop to this.

"But there were enemies to be cleared out of the way, and he was not the one to go to sleep after mess; and his eyes, look you, travelled all over the world as if it had been a man's face. The next thing he did was to turn up in Italy; it was just as if he had put his head out of the window and the sight of him was enough; they gulp down the Austrians at Marengo like a whale swallowing gudgeons! *Haouf!* The French Victories blew their trumpets so loud that

the whole world could hear the noise, and there was an end of it.

"'We will not keep on at this game any longer!' say the Germans.

"'That is enough of this sort of thing,' say the others.

"Here is the upshot. Europe shows the white feather, England knuckles under, general peace all round, and kings and peoples pretending to embrace each other. While then and there the Emperor hits on the idea of the Legion of Honor, there's a fine thing if you like!

"He spoke to the whole army at Boulogne. 'In France,' so he said, 'every man is brave. So the civilian who does gloriously shall be the soldier's sister, the soldier shall be his brother, and both shall stand together beneath the flag of honor.'

"By the time that the rest of us who were away down there in Egypt had come back again, everything was changed. We had seen him last as a general, and in no time we find that he is Emperor! And when this was settled (and it may safely be said that every one was satisfied) there was a holy ceremony such as never was seen under the canopy of heaven. Faith, France gave herself to him, like a handsome girl to a lancer, and the Pope and all his cardinals in robes of red and gold come across the Alps on purpose to anoint him before the army and the people, who clap their hands.

"There is one thing that it would be very wrong to keep back from you. While he was in Egypt, in the desert not far away from Syria, *the Red Man* had appeared to him on the mountain of Moses, in order to say, 'Everything is going on well.' Then again, on the eve of the victory at Marengo, the Red Man springs to his feet in front of the Emperor for the second time, and says to him—'You shall see the world at your feet; you shall be Emperor of the French, King of Italy, master of Holland, ruler of Spain, Portugal, and the Illyrian Provinces, protector of Germany, savior of Poland, first eagle of the Legion of Honor, and all the rest of it.'

"That Red Man, look you, was a notion of his own, who

ran on errands and carried messages, so many people say, between him and his star. I myself have never believed that; but the Red Man is, undoubtedly, a fact. Napoleon himself spoke of the Red Man who lived up in the roof of the Tuileries, and who used to come to him, he said, in moments of trouble and difficulty. So on the night after his coronation Napoleon saw him for the third time, and they talked over a lot of things together.

"Then the Emperor goes straight to Milan to have himself crowned King of Italy, and then came the real triumph of the soldier. For every one who could write became an officer forthwith, and pensions and gifts of duchies poured down in showers. There were fortunes for the staff that never cost France a penny, and the Legion of Honor was as good as an annuity for the rank and file; I still draw my pension on the strength of it. In short, here were armies provided for in a way that had never been seen before! But the Emperor, who knew that he was to be Emperor over everybody, and not only over the army, bethinks himself of the bourgeois, and sets them to build fairy monuments in places that had been as bare as the back of my hand till then. Suppose, now, that you are coming out of Spain and on the way to Berlin; well, you would see triumphal arches, and in the sculpture upon them the common soldiers are done every bit as beautifully as the generals!

"In two or three years Napoleon fills his cellars with gold, makes bridges, palaces, roads, scholars, festivals, laws, fleets, and harbors; he spends millions on millions, ever so much, and ever so much more to it, so that I have heard it said that he could have paved the whole of France with five-franc pieces if the fancy had taken him; and all this without putting any taxes on you people here. So when he was comfortably seated on his throne, and so thoroughly the master of the situation that all Europe was waiting for leave to do anything for him that he might happen to want; as he had four brothers and three sisters, he said to us, just as it might be by way of conversation, in the order of the

day—'Children, is it fitting that your Emperor's relations should beg their bread? No; I want them all to be luminaries, like me in fact! Therefore, it is urgently necessary to conquer a kingdom for each one of them, so that the French nation may be masters everywhere, so that the Guard may make the whole earth tremble, and France may spit wherever she likes, and every nation shall say to her, as it is written on my coins, "God protects you!"'

"'All right!' answers the army; 'we will fish up kingdoms for you with the bayonet.'

"Ah! there was no backing out of it, look you! If he had taken it into his head to conquer the moon, we should have had to put everything in train, pack our knapsacks, and scramble up; luckily, he had no wish for that excursion. The kings who were used to the comforts of a throne, of course, objected to be lugged off, so we had marching orders. We march, we get there, and the earth begins to shake to its centre again. What times they were for wearing out men and shoe-leather! And the hard knocks that they gave us! Only Frenchmen could have stood it. But you are not ignorant that a Frenchman is a born philosopher; he knows that he must die a little sooner or a little later. So we used to die without a word, because we had the pleasure of watching the Emperor do *this* on the maps."

Here the soldier swung quickly round on one foot, so as to trace a circle on the barn floor with the other.

"'There, that shall be a kingdom,' he used to say, and it was a kingdom. What fine times they were! Colonels became generals while you were looking at them, generals became marshals of France, and marshals became kings. There is one of them still left on his feet to keep Europe in mind of those days, Gascon though he may be, and a traitor to France that he might keep his crown; and he did not blush for his shame, for, after all, a crown, look you, is made of gold. The very sappers and miners who knew how to read became great nobles in the same way. And I who am telling you all this have seen in Paris eleven kings

and a crowd of princes all round about Napoleon, like rays about the sun! Keep this well in your minds, that as every soldier stood a chance of having a throne of his own (provided he showed himself worthy of it), a corporal of the Guard was by way of being a sight to see, and they gaped at him as he went by; for every one came by his share after a victory, it was made perfectly clear in the bulletin. And what battles they were! Austerlitz, where the army was manœuvred as if it had been a review; Eylau, where the Russians were drowned in a lake, just as if Napoleon had breathed on them and blown them in; Wagram, where the fighting was kept up for three whole days without flinching. In short, there were as many battles as there are saints in the calendar.

"Then it was made clear beyond a doubt that Napoleon bore the Sword of God in his scabbard. He had a regard for the soldier. He took the soldier for his child. He was anxious that you should have shoes, shirts, greatcoats, bread, and cartridges; but he kept up his majesty, too, for reigning was his own particular occupation. But, all the same, a sergeant, or even a common soldier, could go up to him and call him 'Emperor,' just as you might say 'My good friend' to me at times. And he would give an answer to anything you put before him. He used to sleep on the snow just like the rest of us—in short, he looked almost like an ordinary man; but I who am telling you all these things have seen him myself with the grape-shot whizzing about his ears, no more put out by it than you are at this moment; never moving a limb, watching through his field-glass, always looking after his business; so we stood our ground likewise, as cool and calm as John the Baptist. I do not know how he did it; but whenever he spoke, a something in his words made our hearts burn within us; and just to let him see that we were his children, and that it was not in us to shirk or flinch, we used to walk just as usual right up to the sluts of cannon that were belching smoke and vomiting battalions of balls, and never a man would so

much as say, 'Look out!' It was a something that made dying men raise their heads to salute him and cry, 'Long live the Emperor!'

"Was that natural? Would you have done this for a mere man?

"Thereupon, having fitted up all his family, and things having so turned out that the Empress Josephine (a good woman for all that) had no children, he was obliged to part company with her, although he loved her not a little. But he must have children, for reasons of State. All the crowned heads of Europe, when they heard of his difficulty, squabbled among themselves as to who should find him a wife. He married an Austrian princess, so they say, who was the daughter of the Cæsars, a man of antiquity whom everybody talks about, not only in our country, where it is said that most things were his doing, but also all over Europe. And so certain sure is that, that I who am talking to you have been myself across the Danube, where I saw the ruins of a bridge built by that man; and it appeared that he was some connection of Napoleon's at Rome, for the Emperor claimed succession there for his son.

"So, after his wedding, which was a holiday for the whole world, and when they let the people off their taxes for ten years to come (though they had to pay them just the same after all, because the excisemen took no notice of the proclamation)—after his wedding, I say, his wife had a child who was King of Rome; a child was born a King while his father was alive, a thing that had never been seen in the world before! That day a balloon set out from Paris to carry the news to Rome, and went all the way in one day. There, now! Is there one of you who will stand me out that there was nothing supernatural in that? No, it was decreed on high. And the mischief take those who will not allow that it was wafted over by God Himself, so as to add to the honor and glory of France!

"But there was the Emperor of Russia, a friend of our Emperor's, who was put out because he had not married

a Russian lady. So the Russian backs up our enemies the English; for there had always been something to prevent Napoleon from putting a spoke in their wheel. Clearly an end must be made of fowl of that feather. Napoleon is vexed, and he says to us—

" 'Soldiers! You have been the masters of every capital in Europe, except Moscow, which is allied to England. So, in order to conquer London and India, which belongs to them in London, I find it absolutely necessary that we go to Moscow.'

"Thereupon the greatest army that ever wore gaiters, and left its footprints all over the globe, is brought together, and drawn up with such peculiar cleverness that the Emperor passed a million of men in review, all in a single day.

" 'Hourra!' cry the Russians, and there is all Russia assembled, a lot of brutes of Cossacks that you never can come up with! It was country against country, a general stramash; we had to look out for ourselves. 'It was all Asia against Europe,' as the Red Man had said to Napoleon. 'All right,' Napoleon had answered, 'I shall be ready for them.'

"And there, in fact, were all the kings who came to lick Napoleon's hand. Austria, Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, Poland, and Italy, all speaking us fair and going along with us; it was a fine thing! The Eagles had never cooed before as they did on parade in those days, when they were reared above all the flags of all the nations of Europe. The Poles could not contain their joy because the Emperor had a notion of setting up their kingdom again; and ever since Poland and France have always been like brothers. In short, the army shouts, 'Russia shall be ours!'

"We cross the frontiers, all the lot of us. We march and better march, but never a Russian do we see. At last all our watchdogs are encamped at Borodino. That was where I received the Cross, and there is no denying that it was a cursed battle. The Emperor was not easy in his mind; he had seen the Red Man, who said to him, 'My child, you are

going a little too fast for your feet; you will run short of men, and your friends will play you false.'

"Thereupon the Emperor proposes a treaty. But before he signs it, he says to us—'Let us give these Russians a drubbing!'

" 'All right!' cried the army.

" 'Forward!' say the sergeants.

"My clothes were all falling to pieces, my shoes were worn out with trapezing over those roads out there, which are not good going at all. But it is all one. 'Since here is the last of the row,' said I to myself, 'I mean to get all I can out of it.'

"We were posted before the great ravine; we had seats in the front row. The signal is given, and seven hundred guns begin a conversation fit to make the blood spurt from your ears. One should give the devil his due, and the Russians let themselves be cut in pieces just like Frenchmen; they did not give way, and we made no advance.

" 'Forward!' is the cry; 'here is the Emperor!'

"So it was. He rides past us at a gallop, and makes a sign to us that a great deal depends on our carrying the redoubt. He puts fresh heart into us; we rush forward, I am the first man to reach the gorge. Ah! *Mon Dieu!* how they fell, colonels, lieutenants, and common soldiers, all alike! There were shoes to fit up those who had none, and epaulets for the knowing fellows that knew how to write. . . . Victory is the cry all along the line! And, upon my word, there were twenty-five thousand Frenchmen lying on the field. No more, I assure you! Such a thing was never seen before; it was just like a field when the corn is cut, with a man lying there for every ear of wheat. That sobered the rest of us. The Man comes, and we make a circle round about him, and he coaxes us round (for he could be very nice when he chose), and persuades us to dine with Duke Humphrey, when we were as hungry as hunters. Then our consoler distributes the Crosses of the Legion of Honor himself, salutes the dead, and says to us, 'On to Moscow!'

"'To Moscow, so be it!' says the army.

"We take Moscow. What do the Russians do but set fire to their city! There was a blaze, two leagues of bonfire that burned for two days! The buildings fell about our ears like slates, and molten lead and iron came down in showers; it was really horrible; it was a light to see our sorrows by, I can tell you! The Emperor said, 'There, that is enough of this sort of thing; all my men shall stay here.'

"We amuse ourselves for a bit by recruiting and repairing our frames, for we really were much fatigued by the campaign. We take away with us a gold cross from the top of the Kremlin, and every soldier had a little fortune. But on the way back the winter came down on us a month earlier than usual, a matter which the learned (like a set of fools) have never sufficiently explained; and we are nipped with the cold. We were no longer an army after that, do you understand? There was an end of generals and even of the sergeants; hunger and misery took the command instead, and all of us were absolutely equal under their reign. All we thought of was how to get back to France; no one stooped to pick up his gun or his money; every one walked straight before him, and armed himself as he thought fit, and no one cared about glory.

"The Emperor saw nothing of his star all the time, for the weather was so bad. There was some misunderstanding between him and heaven. Poor man! how bad he felt when he saw his Eagles flying with their backs turned on victory! That was really too rough! Well, the next thing is the Beresina. And here and now, my friends, any one can assure you on his honor, and by all that is sacred, that *never*, no, never since there have been men on earth, never in this world has there been seen such a fricassee of an army, caissons, transports, artillery and all, in such snow as that and under such a pitiless sky. It was so cold that you burned your hand on the barrel of your gun if you happened to touch it. There it was that the pontooners saved the army, for the pontooners stood firm at their posts; it was there that

Gondrin behaved like a hero, and he is the sole survivor of all the men who were dogged enough to stand in the river so as to build the bridges on which the army crossed over, and so escaped the Russians, who still respected the Grand Army on account of its past victories. And Gondrin is an accomplished soldier," he went on, pointing to his friend, who was gazing at him with the rapt attention peculiar to deaf people, "a distinguished soldier who deserves to have your very highest esteem.

"I saw the Emperor standing by the bridge," he went on, "and never feeling the cold at all. Was that, again, a natural thing? He was looking on at the loss of his treasures, of his friends, and those who had fought with him in Egypt. Bah! there was an end of everything. Women and wagons and guns were all engulfed and swallowed up, everything went to wreck and ruin. A few of the bravest among us saved the Eagles, for the Eagles, look you, meant France, and all the rest of you; it was the civil and military honor of France that was in our keeping, there must be no spot on the honor of France, and the cold should never make her bow her head. There was no getting warm except in the neighborhood of the Emperor; for whenever he was in danger we hurried up, all frozen as we were—we who would not stop to hold out a hand to a fallen friend.

"They say, too, that he shed tears of a night over his poor family of soldiers. Only he and Frenchmen could have pulled themselves out of such a plight; but we did pull ourselves out, though, as I am telling you, it was with loss, ay, and heavy loss. The Allies had eaten up all our provisions; everybody began to betray him, just as the Red Man had foretold. The rattle-pates in Paris, who had kept quiet ever since the Imperial Guard had been established, think that *he* is dead, and hatch a conspiracy. They set to work in the Home Office to overturn the Emperor. These things come to his knowledge and worry him; he says to us at parting: 'Good-by, children; keep to your posts, I will come back again.'

"Bah! Those generals of his lose their heads at once; for when he was away, it was not like the same thing. The marshals fall out among themselves, and make blunders, as was only natural, for Napoleon in his kindness had fed them on gold till they had grown as fat as butter, and they had no mind to march. Troubles came of this, for many of them stayed inactive in garrison towns in the rear, without attempting to tickle up the backs of the enemy behind us, and we were being driven back on France. But Napoleon comes back among us with fresh troops; conscripts they were, and famous conscripts too; he had put some thorough notions of discipline into them—the whelps were good to set their teeth in anybody. He had a bourgeois guard of honor too, and fine troops they were! They melted away like butter on a gridiron. We may put a bold front on it, but everything is against us, although the army still performs prodigies of valor. Whole nations fought against nations in tremendous battles, at Dresden, Lützen, and Bautzen, and then it was that France showed extraordinary heroism, for you must all of you bear in mind that in those times a stout grenadier only lasted six months.

"We always won the day, but the English were always on our track, putting nonsense into other nations' heads, and stirring them up to revolt. In short, we cleared a way through all these mobs of nations; for wherever the Emperor appeared, we made a passage for him; for on the land as on the sea, whenever he said, 'I wish to go forward,' we made the way.

"There comes a final end to it at last. We are back in France; and, in spite of the bitter weather, it did one's heart good to breathe one's native air again, it set up many a poor fellow; and as for me, it put new life into me, I can tell you. But it was a question all at once of defending France, our fair land of France. All Europe was up in arms against us; they took it in bad part that we had tried to keep the Russians in order by driving them back within their own borders, so that they should not gobble us up, for those North-

ern folk have a strong liking for eating up the men of the South, it is a habit they have; I have heard the same thing of them from several generals.

"So the Emperor finds his own father-in-law, his friends whom he had made crowned kings, and the rabble of princes to whom he had given back their thrones, were all against him. Even Frenchmen and allies in our own ranks turned against us, by orders from high quarters, as at Leipsic. Common soldiers would hardly be capable of such abominations; yet these princes, as they called themselves, broke their words three times a day! The next thing they do is to invade France. Wherever our Emperor shows his lion's face, the enemy beats a retreat; he worked more miracles for the defence of France than he had ever wrought in the conquest of Italy, the East, Spain, Europe, and Russia; he has a mind to bury every foreigner in French soil, to give them a respect for France, so he lets them come close up to Paris, so as to do for them at a single blow, and to rise to the highest height of genius in the biggest battle that ever was fought, a mother of battles! But the Parisians wanting to save their trumpery skins, and afraid for their two-penny shops, open their gates, and there is a beginning of the *ragusades*, and an end of all joy and happiness; they make a fool of the Empress, and fly the white flag out at the windows. The Emperor's closest friends among his generals forsake him at last and go over to the Bourbons, of whom no one had ever heard tell. Then he bids us farewell at Fontainebleau:

" 'Soldiers!' . . . (I can hear him yet, we were all crying just like children; the Eagles and the flags had been lowered as if for a funeral. Ah! and it was a funeral, I can tell you; it was the funeral of the Empire; those smart armies of his were nothing but skeletons now.) So he stood there on the flight of steps before his chateau, and he said—'Children, we have been overcome by treachery, but we shall meet again up above in the country of the brave. Protect my child, I leave him in your care. *Long live Napoleon II.!*'

"He had thought of killing himself, so that no one should

behold Napoleon after his defeat; like Jesus Christ before the Crucifixion, he thought himself forsaken by God and by his talisman, and so he took enough poison to kill a regiment, but it had no effect whatever upon him. Another marvel! he discovered that he was immortal; and feeling sure of his case, and knowing that he should be Emperor forever, he went to an island for a little while, so as to study the dispositions of those folk who did not fail to make blunder upon blunder. While he was biding his time, the Chinese and the brutes out in Africa, the Moors and what-not, awkward customers all of them, were so convinced that he was something more than mortal that they respected his flag, saying that God would be displeased if any one meddled with it. So he reigned over all the rest of the world, although the doors of his own France had been closed upon him.

"Then he goes on board the same nutshell of a skiff that he sailed in from Egypt, passes under the noses of the English vessels, and sets foot in France. France recognizes her Emperor, the cuckoo flits from steeple to steeple; France cries with one voice, 'Long live the Emperor!' The enthusiasm for that Wonder of the Ages was thoroughly genuine in these parts. Dauphiné behaved handsomely; and I was uncommonly pleased to learn that people here shed tears of joy on seeing his gray overcoat once more.

"It was on March 1st that Napoleon set out with two hundred men to conquer the kingdom of France and Navarre, which by March 20th had become the French Empire again. On that day he found himself in Paris, and a clean sweep had been made of everything; he had won back his beloved France, and had called all his soldiers about him again, and three words of his had done it all—'Here am I!' 'Twas the greatest miracle God ever worked! Was it ever known in the world before that a man should do nothing but show his hat, and a whole Empire became his? They fancied that France was crushed, did they? Never a bit of it. A National Army springs up again at the sight of the Eagle,

and we all march to Waterloo. There the Guard fall all as one man. Napoleon in his despair heads the rest, and flings himself three times on the enemy's guns without finding the death he sought; we all saw him do it, we soldiers, and the day was lost! That night the Emperor calls all his old soldiers about him, and there on the battlefield, which was soaked with our blood, he burns his flags and his Eagles—the poor Eagles that had never been defeated, that had cried, 'Forward!' in battle after battle, and had flown above us all over Europe. That was the end of the Eagles—all the wealth of England could not purchase for her one tail-feather. The rest is sufficiently known.

"The Red Man went over to the Bourbons like the low scoundrel he is. France is prostrate, the soldier counts for nothing, they rob him of his due, send him about his business, and fill his place with nobles who could not walk, they were so old, so that it made you sorry to see them. They seize Napoleon by treachery, the English shut him up on a desert island in the ocean, on a rock ten thousand feet above the rest of the world. That is the final end of it; there he has to stop till the Red Man gives him back his power again, for the happiness of France. A lot of them say that he is dead! Dead? Oh! yes, very likely. They do not know him, that is plain! They go on telling that fib to deceive the people, and to keep things quiet for their tumble-down government. Listen; this is the whole truth of the matter. His friends have left him alone in the desert to fulfil a prophecy that was made about him, for I forgot to tell you that his name Napoleon really means the *Lion of the Desert.* And that is gospel truth. You will hear plenty of other things said about the Emperor, but they are all monstrous nonsense. Because, look you, to no man of woman born would God have given the power to write his name in red, as he did, across the earth, where he will be remembered forever! . . . Long live 'Napoleon, the father of the soldier, the father of the people!' "

"Long live General Eblé!" cried the pontooner.

"How did you manage not to die in the gorge of the redoubts at Borodino?" asked a peasant woman.

"Do I know? We were a whole regiment when we went down into it, and only a hundred foot were left standing; only infantry could have carried it; for the infantry, look you, is everything in an army—"

"But how about the cavalry?" cried Genestas, slipping down out of the hay in a sudden fashion that drew a startled cry from the boldest.

"Hé, old boy! you are forgetting Poniatowski's Red Lancers, the Cuirassiers, the Dragoons, and the whole boiling. Whenever Napoleon grew tired of seeing his battalions gain no ground toward the end of a victory, he would say to Murat, 'Here, you! cut them in two for me!' and we set out first at a trot, and then at a gallop, *one, two!* and cut a way clean through the ranks of the enemy; it was like slicing an apple in two with a knife. Why, a charge of cavalry is nothing more nor less than a column of cannon balls."

"And how about the pontooners?" cried the deaf veteran.

"There, there! my children," Genestas went on, repenting in his confusion of the sally he had made, when he found himself in the middle of a silent and bewildered group, "there are no agents of police spying here! Here, drink to the Little Corporal with this!"

"Long live the Emperor!" all cried with one voice.

"Hush! children," said the officer, concealing his own deep sorrow with an effort. "Hush! *He is dead.* He died saying, '*Glory, France, and battle.*' So it had to be, children, he must die; but his memory—never!"

Goguelat made an incredulous gesture; then he whispered to those about him, "The officer is still in the service, and orders have been issued that they are to tell the people that the Emperor is dead. You must not think any harm of him, because, after all, a soldier must obey orders."

As Genestas went out of the barn, he heard La Fosseuse say, "That officer, you know, is M. Benassis's friend, and a friend of the Emperor's."

Every soul in the barn rushed to the door to see the commandant again; they saw him in the moonlight, as he took the doctor's arm.

"It was a stupid thing to do," said Genestas. "Quick! let us go into the house. Those Eagles, cannon, and campaigns! . . . I had quite forgotten where I was."

"Well, what do you think of our Goguelat?" asked Benassis.

"So long as such stories are told in France, sir, she will always find the fourteen armies of the Republic within her, at need; and her cannon will be perfectly able to keep up a conversation with the rest of Europe. That is what I think."

A few moments later they reached Benassis's dwelling, and soon were sitting on either side of the hearth in the salon; the dying fire in the grate still sent up a few sparks now and then. Each was absorbed in thought. Genestas was hesitating to ask one last question. In spite of the marks of confidence that he had received, he feared lest the doctor should regard his inquiry as indiscreet. He looked searchingly at Benassis more than once; and an answering smile, full of a kindly cordiality, such as lights up the faces of men of real strength of character, seemed to give him in advance the favorable reply for which he sought. So he spoke—"Your life, sir, is so different from the lives of ordinary men that you will not be surprised to hear me ask you the reason of your retired existence. My curiosity may seem to you to be unmannerly, but you will admit that it is very natural. Listen a moment: I have had comrades with whom I have never been on intimate terms, even though I have made many campaigns with them; but there have been others to whom I would say, 'Go to the paymaster and draw our money,' three days after we had got drunk together, a thing that will happen, for the quietest folk must have a frolic fit at times. Well, then, you are one of those people whom I take for a friend without waiting to ask leave, nay, without so much as knowing wherefore."

"Captain Bluteau—"

Whenever the doctor had called his guest by his assumed name, the latter had been unable for some time past to suppress a slight grimace. Benassis, happening to look up just then, caught this expression of repugnance; he sought to discover the reason of it, and looked full into the soldier's face, but the real enigma was wellnigh insoluble for him, so he set down these symptoms to physical suffering, and went on—"Captain, I am about to speak of myself. I have had to force myself to do so already several times since yesterday, while telling you about the improvements that I have managed to introduce here; but it was a question of the interests of the people and the commune, with which mine are necessarily bound up. But, now, if I tell you my story, I should have to speak wholly of myself, and mine has not been a very interesting life."

"If it were as uneventful as La Fosseuse's life," answered Genestas, "I should still be glad to know about it; I should like to know the untoward events that could bring a man of your calibre into this canton."

"Captain, for these twelve years I have lived in silence; and now, as I wait at the brink of the grave for the stroke that shall cast me into it, I will candidly own to you that this silence is beginning to weigh heavily upon me. I have borne my sorrows alone for twelve years; I have had none of the comfort that friendship gives in such full measure to a heart in pain. My poor sick folk and my peasants certainly set me an example of unmurmuring resignation; but they know that I at least understand them and their troubles, while there is not a soul here who knows of the tears that I have shed, no one to give me the hand-clasp of a comrade, the noblest reward of all, a reward that falls to the lot of every other, even Gondrin has not missed that."

Genestas held out his hand, a sudden impulsive movement by which Benassis was deeply touched.

"There is La Fosseuse," he went on in a different voice; "she perhaps would have understood as the angels might; but then, too, she might possibly have loved me, and that

would have been a misfortune. Listen, captain, my confession could only be made to an old soldier who looks as leniently as you do on the failings of others, or to some young man who has not lost the illusions of youth; for only a man who knows life well, or a lad to whom it is all unknown, could understand my story. The captains of past times who fell upon the field of battle used to make their last confession to the cross on the hilt of their sword; if there was no priest at hand, it was the sword that received and kept the last confidences between a human soul and God. And will you hear and understand me, for you are one of Napoleon's finest sword-blades, as thoroughly tempered and as strong as steel? Some parts of my story can only be understood by a delicate tenderness, and through a sympathy with the beliefs that dwell in simple hearts; beliefs which would seem absurd to the sophisticated people who make use in their own lives of the prudential maxims of worldly wisdom that only apply to the government of states. To you I shall speak openly and without reserve, as a man who does not seek to apologize for his life with the good and evil done in the course of it; as one who will hide nothing from you, because he lives so far from the world of to-day, careless of the judgments of man, and full of hope in God."

Benassis stopped, rose to his feet, and said, "Before I begin my story, I will order tea. Jacquotte has never missed asking me if I will take it for these twelve years past, and she will certainly interrupt us. Do you care about it, captain?"

"No, thank you."

In another moment Benassis returned.

IV

THE COUNTRY DOCTOR'S CONFESSION

"*I WAS BORN* in a little town in Languedoc," the doctor resumed. "My father had been settled there for many years, and there my early childhood was spent. When I was eight years old I was sent to the school of the Oratorians at Sorrèze, and only left it to finish my studies in Paris. My father had squandered his patrimony in the course of an exceedingly wild and extravagant youth. He had retrieved his position partly by a fortunate marriage, partly by the slow persistent thrift characteristic of provincial life; for in the provinces people pride themselves on accumulating rather than on spending, and all the ambition in a man's nature is either extinguished or directed to money-getting, for want of any nobler end. So he had grown rich at last, and thought to transmit to his only son all the cut-and-dried experience which he himself had purchased at the price of his lost illusions; a noble last illusion of age which fondly seeks to bequeath its virtues and its wary prudence to heedless youth, intent only on the enjoyment of the enchanted life that lies before it.

"This foresight on my father's part led him to make plans for my education for which I had to suffer. He sedulously concealed my expectations of wealth from me, and during the fairest years of my youth compelled me, for my own good, to endure the burden of anxiety and hardship that presses upon a young man who has his own way to make in the world. His idea in so doing was to instil the virtues of poverty into me—patience, a thirst for learning, and a love of work for its own sake. He hoped to teach me to set a proper value on my inheritance, by letting me learn, in this way, all that it costs to make a fortune; wherefore,

as soon as I was old enough to understand his advice, he urged me to choose a profession and to work steadily at it. My tastes inclined me to the study of medicine.

"So I left Sorrèze, after ten years of the almost monastic discipline of the Oratorians; and, fresh from the quiet life of a remote provincial school, I was taken straight to the capital. My father went with me in order to introduce me to the notice of a friend of his; and (all unknown to me) my two elders took the most elaborate precautions against any ebullitions of youth on my part, innocent lad though I was. My allowance was rigidly computed on a scale based upon the absolute necessaries of life, and I was obliged to produce my certificate of attendance at the Ecole de Médecine before I was allowed to draw my quarter's income. The excuse for this sufficiently humiliating distrust was the necessity of my acquiring methodical and business-like habits. My father, however, was not sparing of money for all the necessary expenses of my education and for the amusements of Parisian life. His old friend was delighted to have a young man to guide through the labyrinth into which I had entered. He was one of those men whose natures lead them to docket their thoughts, feelings, and opinions every whit as carefully as their papers. He would turn up last year's memorandum book, and could tell in a moment what he had been doing a twelvemonth since in this very month, day, and hour of the present year. Life, for him, was a business enterprise, and he kept the books after the most approved business methods. There was real worth in him, though he might be punctilious, shrewd and suspicious, and though he never lacked specious excuses for the precautionary measures that he took with regard to me. He used to buy all my books; he paid for my lessons; and once, when the fancy took me to learn to ride, the good soul himself found me out a riding-school, went thither with me, and anticipated my wishes by putting a horse at my disposal whenever I had a holiday. In spite of all this cautious strategy, which I managed to defeat as soon as I had any temptation to do so, the kind old man was a second father to me.

"'My friend,' he said, as soon as he surmised that I should break away altogether from my leading-strings, unless he relaxed them, 'young folk are apt to commit follies which draw down the wrath of their elders upon their heads, and you may happen to want money at some time or other; if so, come to me. Your father helped me nobly once upon a time, and I shall always have a few crowns to spare for you; but never tell me any lies, and do not be ashamed to own to your faults. I myself was young once; we shall always get on well together, like two good comrades.'

"My father found lodgings for me with some quiet, middle-class people in the Latin Quarter, and my room was furnished nicely enough; but this first taste of independence, my father's kindness, and the self-denial which he seemed to be exercising for me, brought me but little happiness. Perhaps the value of liberty cannot be known until it has been experienced; and the memories of the freedom of my childhood had been almost effaced by the irksome and dreary life at school, from which my spirits had scarcely recovered. In addition to this, my father had urged new tasks upon me, so that altogether Paris was an enigma. You must acquire some knowledge of its pleasures before you can amuse yourself in Paris.

"My real position, therefore, was quite unchanged, save that my new *lycée* was a much larger building, and was called the Ecole de Médecine. Nevertheless, I studied away bravely at first; I attended lectures diligently; I worked desperately hard and without relaxation, so strongly was my imagination affected by the abundant treasures of knowledge to be gained in the capital. But very soon I heedlessly made acquaintances; danger lurks hidden beneath the rash confiding friendships that have so strong a charm for youth, and gradually I was drawn into the dissipated life of the capital. I became an enthusiastic lover of the theatre; and with my craze for actors and the play the work of my demoralization began. The stage, in a great metropolis, exerts a very deadly influence over the young; they never quit the theatre save in a

state of emotional excitement almost always beyond their power to control; society and the law seem to me to be accessories to the irregularities brought about in this way. Our legislation has shut its eyes, so to speak, to the passions that torment a young man between twenty and five-and-twenty years of age. In Paris he is assailed by temptations of every kind. Religion may preach and Law may demand that he should walk uprightly, but all his surroundings and the tone of those about him are so many incitements to evil. Do not the best of men and the most devout women there look upon continence as ridiculous? The great city, in fact, seems to have set herself to give encouragement to vice and to this alone; for a young man finds that the entrance to every honorable career in which he might look for success is barred by hindrances even more numerous than the snares that are continually set for him, so that through his weaknesses he may be robbed of his money.

"For a long while I went every evening to some theatre, and little by little I feel into idle ways. I grew more and more slack over my work; even my most pressing tasks were apt to be put off till the morrow, and before very long there was an end of my search after knowledge for its own sake; I did nothing more than the work which was absolutely required to enable me to get through the examinations that must be passed before I could become a doctor. I attended the public lectures, but I no longer paid any attention to the professors, who, in my opinion, were a set of dotards. I had already broken my idols—I became a Parisian.

"To be brief, I led the aimless drifting life of a young provincial thrown into the heart of a great city; still retaining some good and true feeling, still clinging more or less to the observance of certain rules of conduct, still fighting in vain against the debasing influence of evil examples, though I offered but a feeble, half-hearted resistance, for the enemy had accomplices within me. Yes, sir, my face is not misleading; past storms have plainly left their traces there. Yet, since I had drunk so deeply of the pure fountain of religion

in my early youth, I was haunted in the depths of my soul, through all my wanderings, by an ideal of moral perfection which could not fail one day to bring me back to God by the paths of weariness and remorse. Is not he who feels the pleasures of earth most keenly sure to be attracted, soon or late, by the fruits of heaven?

"At first I went through the experience, more or less vivid, that always comes with youth—the countless moments of exultation, the unnumbered transports of despair. Sometimes I took my vehement energy of feeling for a resolute will, and over-estimated my powers; sometimes, at the mere sight of some trifling obstacle with which I was about to come into collision, I was far more cast down than I ought to have been. Then I would devise vast plans, would dream of glory, and betake myself to work; but a pleasure party would divert me from the noble projects based on so infirm a purpose. Vague recollections of these great abortive schemes of mine left a deceptive glow in my soul and fostered my belief in myself, without giving me the energy to produce. In my indolent self-sufficiency I was in a very fair way to become a fool, for what is a fool but a man who fails to justify the excellent opinion which he has formed of himself? My energy was directed toward no definite aims; I wished for the flowers of life without the toil of cultivating them. I had no idea of the obstacles, so I imagined that everything was easy; luck, I thought, accounted for success in science and in business, and genius was charlatanism. I took it for granted that I should be a great man, because there was the power of becoming one within me; so I discounted all my future glory, without giving a thought to the patience required for the conception of a great work, nor of the execution, in the course of which all the difficulties of the task appear.

"The sources of my amusements were soon exhausted. The charm of the theatre does not last for very long; and, for a poor student, Paris shortly became an empty wilderness. They were dull and uninteresting people that I met

with in the circle of the family with whom I lived; but these, and an old man who had now lost touch with the world, were all the society that I had.

"So, like every young man who takes a dislike to the career marked out for him, I rambled about the streets for whole days together; I strolled along the quays, through the museums and public gardens, making no attempt to arrive at a clear understanding of my position, and without a single definite idea in my head. The burden of unemployed energies is more felt at that age than at any other; there is such an abundance of vitality running to waste, so much activity without result. I had no idea of the power that a resolute will puts into the hands of a man in his youth; for when he has ideas and puts his whole heart and soul into the work of carrying them out, his strength is yet further increased by the undaunted courage of youthful convictions.

"Childhood in its simplicity knows nothing of the perils of life; youth sees both its vastness and its difficulties, and at the prospect the courage of youth sometimes flags. We are still serving our apprenticeship to life; we are new to the business, a kind of faint-heartedness overpowers us, and leaves us in an almost dazed condition of mind. We feel that we are helpless aliens in a strange country. At all ages we shrink back involuntarily from the unknown. And a young man is very much like the soldier who will walk up to the cannon's mouth, and is put to flight by a ghost. He hesitates among the maxims of the world. The rules of attack and of self-defence are alike unknown to him; he can neither give nor take; he is attracted by women, and stands in awe of them; his very good qualities tell against him, he is all generosity and modesty, and completely innocent of mercenary designs. Pleasure and not interest is his object when he tells a lie; and among many dubious courses, the conscience, with which as yet he has not juggled, points out to him the right way, which he is slow to take.

"There are men whose lives are destined to be shaped by

the impulses of their hearts, rather than by any reasoning process that takes place in their heads, and such natures as these will remain for a long while in the position that I have described. This was my own case. I became the plaything of two contending impulses; the desires of youth were always held in check by a faint-hearted sentimentality. Life in Paris is a cruel ordeal for impressionable natures, the great inequalities of fortune or of position inflame their souls and stir up bitter feelings. In that world of magnificence and pettiness envy is more apt to be a dagger than a spur. You are bound either to fall a victim or to become a partisan in this incessant strife of ambitions, desires, and hatreds, in the midst of which you are placed; and by slow degrees the picture of vice triumphant and virtue made ridiculous produces its effect on a young man, and he wavers; life in Paris soon rubs the bloom from conscience, the infernal work of demoralization has begun, and is soon accomplished. The first of pleasures, that which at the outset comprehends all the others, is set about with such perils that it is impossible not to reflect upon the least actions which it provokes, impossible not to calculate all its consequences. These calculations lead to selfishness. If some poor student, carried away by an impassioned enthusiasm, is fain to rise above selfish considerations, the suspicious attitude of those about him makes him pause and doubt; it is so hard not to share their mistrust, so difficult not to be on his guard against his own generous thoughts. His heart is seared and contracted by this struggle, the current of life sets toward the brain, and the callousness of the Parisian is the result—the condition of things in which schemes for power and wealth are concealed by the most charming frivolity, and lurk beneath the sentimental transports that take the place of enthusiasm. The simplest-natured woman in Paris always keeps a clear head even in the intoxication of happiness.

"This atmosphere was bound to affect my opinions and my conduct. The errors that have poisoned my life would have lain lightly on many a conscience, but we in the South

have a religious faith that leads us to believe in a future life, and in the truths set forth by the Catholic Church. These beliefs give depth and gravity to every feeling, and to remorse a terrible and lasting power.

"The army were the masters of society at the time when I was studying medicine. In order to shine in women's eyes, one had to be a colonel at the very least. A poor student counted for absolutely nothing. Goaded by the strength of my desires, and finding no outlet for them; hampered at every step and in every wish by the want of money; looking on study and fame as too slow a means of arriving at the pleasures that tempted me; drawn one way by my inward scruples, and another by evil examples; meeting with every facility for low dissipation, and finding nothing but hindrances barring the way to good society, I passed my days in wretchedness, overwhelmed by a surging tumult of desires, and by indolence of the most deadly kind, utterly cast down at times, only to be as suddenly elated.

"The catastrophe which at length put an end to this crisis was commonplace enough. The thought of troubling the peace of a household has always been repugnant to me; and not only so, I could not dissemble my feelings, the instinct of sincerity was too strong in me; I should have found it a physical impossibility to lead a life of glaring falsity. There is for me but little attraction in pleasures that must be snatched. I wish for full consciousness of my happiness. I led a life of solitude, for which there seemed to be no remedy; for I shrank from openly vicious courses, and the many efforts that I made to enter society were all in vain. There I might have met with some woman who would have undertaken the task of teaching me the perils of every path, who would have formed my manners, counselled me without wounding my vanity, and introduced me everywhere where I was likely to make friends who would be useful to me in my future career. In my despair, an intrigue of the most dangerous kind would perhaps have had its attractions for me; but even peril was out of my reach. My inexperience

sent me back again to my solitude, where I dwelt face to face with my thwarted desires.

"At last I formed a connection, at first a secret one, with a girl, whom I persuaded, half against her will, to share my life. Her people were worthy folk, who had but small means. It was not very long before she left her simple sheltered life, and fearlessly intrusted me with a future that virtue would have made happy and fair; thinking, no doubt, that my narrow income was the surest guarantee of my faithfulness to her. From that moment the tempest that had raged within me ceased, and happiness lulled my wild desires and ambitions to sleep. Such happiness is only possible for a young man who is ignorant of the world, who knows nothing as yet of its accepted codes nor of the strength of prejudice; but while it lasts, his happiness is as all-absorbing as a child's. Is not first love like a return of childhood across the intervening years of anxiety and toil?

"There are men who learn life at a glance, who see it for what it is at once, who learn experience from the mistakes of others, who apply the current maxims of worldly wisdom to their own case with signal success, and make unerring forecasts at all times. Wise in their generation are such cool heads as these! But there is also a luckless race endowed with the impressionable, keenly-sensitive temperament of the poet; these are the natures that fall into error, and to this latter class I belonged. There was no great depth in the feeling that first drew me toward this poor girl; I followed my instinct rather than my heart when I sacrificed her to myself, and I found no lack of excellent reasons wherewith to persuade myself that there was no harm whatever in what I had done. And as for her—she was devotion itself, a noble soul with a clear, keen intelligence and a heart of gold. She never counselled me other than wisely. Her love put fresh heart into me from the first; she foretold a splendid future of success and fortune for me, and gently constrained me to take up my studies again by her belief in me. In these days there is scarcely a branch of science that

has no bearing upon medicine; it is a difficult task to achieve distinction, but the reward is great, for in Paris fame always means fortune. The unselfish girl devoted herself to me, shared in every interest, even the slightest, of my life, and managed so carefully and wisely that we lived in comfort on my narrow income. I had more money to spare, now that there were two of us, than I had ever had while I lived by myself. Those were my happiest days. I worked with enthusiasm, I had a definite aim before me, I had found the encouragement I needed. Everything I did or thought I carried to her, who had not only found the way to gain my love, but above and beyond this had filled me with sincere respect for her by the modest discretion which she displayed in a position where discretion and modesty seemed wellnigh impossible. But one day was like another, sir; and it is only after our hearts have passed through all the storms appointed for us that we know the value of a monotonous happiness, and learn that life holds nothing more sweet for us than this; a calm happiness in which the fatigue of existence is felt no longer, and the inmost thoughts of either find response in the other's soul.

"My former dreams assailed me again. They were my own vehement longings for the pleasures of wealth that awoke, though it was in love's name that I now asked for them. In the evenings I grew abstracted and moody, rapt in imaginings of the pleasures I could enjoy if I were rich, and thoughtlessly gave expression to my desires in answer to a tender questioning voice. I must have drawn a painful sigh from her who had devoted herself to my happiness; for she, sweet soul, felt nothing more cruelly than the thought that I wished for something that she could not give me immediately. Oh! sir, a woman's devotion is sublime!"

There was a sharp distress in the doctor's exclamation which seemed prompted by some recollection of his own; he paused for a brief while, and Genestas respected his musings.

"Well, sir," Benassis resumed, "something happened which should have concluded the marriage thus begun; but

instead of that it put an end to it, and was the cause of all my misfortunes. My father died and left me a large fortune. The necessary business arrangements demanded my presence in Languedoc for several months, and I went thither alone. At last I had regained my freedom! Even the mildest yoke is galling to youth; we do not see its necessity any more than we see the need to work, until we have had some experience of life. I came and went without giving an account of my actions to any one; there was no need to do so now unless I wished, and I relished liberty with all the keen capacity for enjoyment that we have in Languedoc. I did not absolutely forget the ties that bound me; but I was so absorbed in other matters of interest that my mind was distracted from them, and little by little the recollection of them faded away. Letters full of heartfelt tenderness reached me; but at two-and-twenty a young man imagines that all women are alike tender; he does not know love from a passing infatuation; all things are confused in the sensations of pleasure which seem at first to comprise everything. It was only later, when I came to a clearer knowledge of men and of things as they are, that I could estimate those noble letters at their just worth. No trace of selfishness was mingled with the feeling expressed in them; there was nothing but gladness on my account for my change of fortune, and regret on her own; it never occurred to her that I could change toward her, for she felt that she herself was incapable of change. But even then I had given myself up to ambitious dreams; I thought of drinking deeply of all the delights that wealth could give, of becoming a person of consequence, of making a brilliant marriage. So I read the letters, and contented myself with saying, 'She is very fond of me,' with the indifference of a coxcomb. Even then I was perplexed as to how to extricate myself from this entanglement; I was ashamed of it, and this fact as well as my perplexity led me to be cruel. We begin by wounding the victim, and then we kill it, that the sight of our cruelty may no longer put us to the blush. Late reflections upon those days of error

have unveiled for me many a dark depth in the human heart. Yes, believe me, those who best have fathomed the good and evil in human nature have honestly examined themselves in the first instance. Conscience is the starting-point of our investigations; we proceed from ourselves to others, never from others to ourselves.

"When I returned to Paris I took up my abode in a large house which, in pursuance with my orders, had been taken for me, and the one person interested in my return and change of address was not informed of it. I wished to cut a figure among young men of fashion. I waited a few days to taste the first delights of wealth; and when, flushed with the excitement of my new position, I felt that I could trust myself to do so, I went to see the poor girl whom I meant to cast off. With a woman's quickness she saw what was passing in my mind, and hid her tears from me. She could not but have despised me; but it was her nature to be gentle and kindly, and she never showed her scorn. Her forbearance was a cruel punishment. An unresisting victim is not a pleasant thing; whether the murder is done decorously in the drawing-room, or brutally on the highway, there should be a struggle to give some plausible excuse for taking a life. I renewed my visits very affectionately at first, making efforts to be gracious, if not tender; by slow degrees I became politely civil; and one day, by a sort of tacit agreement between us, she allowed me to treat her as a stranger, and I thought that I had done all that could be expected of me. Nevertheless I abandoned myself to my new life with almost frenzied eagerness, and sought to drown in gayety any vague lingering remorse that I felt. A man who has lost his self-respect cannot endure his own society, so I led the dissipated life that wealthy young men lead in Paris. Owing to a good education and an excellent memory, I seemed cleverer than I really was, forthwith I looked down upon other people; and those who, for their own purposes, wished to prove to me that I was possessed of extraordinary abilities, found me quite convinced on that head. Praise is the most insidious

of all methods of treachery known to the world; and this is nowhere better understood than in Paris, where intriguing schemers know how to stifle every kind of talent at its birth by heaping laurels on its cradle. So I did nothing worthy of my reputation; I reaped no advantages from the golden opinions entertained of me, and made no acquaintances likely to be useful in my future career. I wasted my energies in numberless frivolous pursuits, and in the short-lived love intrigues that are the disgrace of salons in Paris, where every one seeks for love, grows blasé in the pursuit, falls into the libertinism sanctioned by polite society, and ends by feeling as much astonished at real passion as the world is over a heroic action. I did as others did. Often I dealt to generous and candid souls the deadly wound from which I myself was slowly perishing. Yet though deceptive appearances might lead others to misjudge me, I could never overcome my scrupulous delicacy. Many times I had been duped, and should have blushed for myself had it been otherwise; I secretly prided myself on acting in good faith, although this lowered me in the eyes of others. As a matter of fact, the world has a considerable respect for cleverness, whatever form it takes, and success justifies everything. So the world was pleased to attribute to me all the good qualities and evil propensities, all the victories and defeats which had never been mine; credited me with conquests of which I knew nothing, and sat in judgment upon actions of which I had never been guilty. I scorned to contradict the slanders, and self-love led me to regard the more flattering rumors with a certain complacence. Outwardly my existence was pleasant enough, but in reality I was miserable. If it had not been for the tempest of misfortunes that very soon burst over my head, all good impulses must have perished, and evil would have triumphed in the struggle that went on within me; enervating self-indulgence would have destroyed the body, as the detestable habits of egotism exhausted the springs of the soul. But I was ruined financially. This was how it came about.

"No matter how large his fortune may be, a man is sure to find some one else in Paris possessed of yet greater wealth, whom he must needs aim at surpassing. In this unequal contest I was vanquished at the end of four years; and, like many another hare-brained youngster, I was obliged to sell part of my property and to mortgage the remainder to satisfy my creditors. Then a terrible blow suddenly struck me down.

"Two years had passed since I had last seen the woman whom I had deserted. The turn that my affairs were taking would no doubt have brought me back to her once more; but one evening, in the midst of a gay circle of acquaintances, I received a note written in a trembling hand. It only contained these few words:

" 'I have only a very little while to live, and I should like to see you, my friend, so that I may know what will become of my child—whether henceforward he will be yours; and also to soften the regret that some day you might perhaps feel for my death.'

"The letter made me shudder. It was a revelation of secret anguish in the past, while it contained a whole unknown future. I set out on foot, I would not wait for my carriage, I went across Paris, goaded by remorse, and gnawed by a dreadful fear that was confirmed by the first sight of my victim. In the extreme neatness and cleanliness beneath which she had striven to hide her poverty I read all the terrible sufferings of her life; she was nobly reticent about them in her effort to spare my feelings, and only alluded to them after I had solemnly promised to adopt our child. She died, sir, in spite of all the care lavished upon her, and all that science could suggest was done for her in vain. The care and devotion that had come too late only served to render her last moments less bitter.

"To support her little one she had worked incessantly with her needle. Love for her child had given her strength to endure her life of hardship; but it had not enabled her to bear my desertion, the keenest of all her griefs. Many times

she had thought of trying to see me, but her woman's pride had always prevented this. While I squandered floods of gold upon my caprices, no memory of the past had ever bidden a single drop to fall in her home to help mother and child to live; but she had been content to weep, and had not cursed me; she had looked upon her evil fortune as the natural punishment of her error. With the aid of a good priest of Saint Sulpice, whose kindly voice had restored peace to her soul, she had sought for hope in the shadow of the altar, whither she had gone to dry her tears. The bitter flood that I had poured into her heart gradually abated; and one day, when she heard her child say 'Father,' a word that she had not taught him, she forgave my crime. But sorrow and weeping and days and nights of ceaseless toil injured her health. Religion had brought its consolations and the courage to bear the ills of life, but all too late. She fell ill of a heart complaint brought on by grief and by the strain of expectation, for she always thought that I should return, and her hopes always sprang up afresh after every disappointment. Her health grew worse; and at last, as she was lying on her deathbed, she wrote those few lines, containing no word of reproach, prompted by religion, and by a belief in the goodness in my nature. She knew, she said, that I was blinded rather than bent on doing wrong. She even accused herself of carrying her womanly pride too far. 'If I had only written sooner,' she said, 'perhaps there might have been time for a marriage which would have legitimated our child.'

"It was only on her child's account that she wished for the solemnization of the ties that bound us, nor would she have sought for this if she had not felt that death was at hand to unloose them. But it was too late; even then she had only a few hours to live. By her bedside, where I learned to know the worth of a devoted heart, my nature underwent a final change. I was still at an age when tears are shed. During those last days, while the precious life yet lingered, my tears, my words, and everything I did bore witness to my heartstricken repentance. The meanness and

pettiness of the society in which I had moved, the emptiness and selfishness of women of fashion, had taught me to wish for and to seek an elect soul, and now I had found it—too late. I was weary of lying words and of masked faces; counterfeit passion had set me dreaming; I had called on love; and now I beheld love lying before me, slain by my own hands, and had no power to keep it beside me, no power to keep what was so wholly mine.

"The experience of four years had taught me to know my own real character. My temperament, the nature of my imagination, my religious principles, which had not been eradicated, but had rather lain dormant; my turn of mind, my heart that only now began to make itself felt—everything within me led me to resolve to fill my life with the pleasures of affection, to replace a lawless love by family happiness—the truest happiness on earth. Visions of close and dear companionship appealed to me but the more strongly for my wanderings in the wilderness, my grasping at pleasures unennobled by thought or feeling. So though the revolution within me was rapidly effected, it was permanent. With my southern temperament, warped by the life I led in Paris, I should certainly have come to look without pity on an unhappy girl betrayed by her lover; I should have laughed at the story if it had been told me by some wag in merry company (for with us in France a clever *bon mot* dispels all feeling of horror at a crime), but all sophistries were silenced in the presence of this angelic creature, against whom I could bring no least word of reproach. There stood her coffin, and my child, who did not know that I had murdered his mother, smiled at me.

"She died. She died happy when she saw that I loved her, and that this new love was due neither to pity nor to the ties that bound us together. Never shall I forget her last hours. Love had been won back, her mind was at rest about her child, and happiness triumphed over suffering. The comfort and luxury about her, the merriment of her child, who looked prettier still in the dainty garb that had replaced

his baby-clothes, were pledges of a happy future for the little one, in whom she saw her own life renewed.

"The curate of Saint Sulpice witnessed my terrible distress. His words wellnigh made me despair. He did not attempt to offer conventional consolation, and put the gravity of my responsibilities unsparingly before me, but I had no need of a spur. The conscience within me spoke loudly enough already. A woman had placed a generous confidence in me. I had lied to her from the first; I had told her that I loved her, and then I had cast her off; I had brought all this sorrow upon an unhappy girl who had braved the opinion of the world for me, and who therefore should have been sacred in my eyes. She had died forgiving me. Her implicit trust in the word of a man who had once before broken his promise to her effaced the memory of all her pain and grief, and she slept in peace. Agatha, who had given me her girlish faith, had found in her heart another faith to give me—the faith of a mother. Oh! sir, the child, *her* child! God alone can know all that he was to me! The dear little one was like his mother; he had her winning grace in his little ways, his talk and ideas; but for me, my child was not only a child, but something more; was he not the token of my forgiveness, my honor?

"He should have more than a father's affection. He should be loved as his mother would have loved him. My remorse might change to happiness if I could only make him feel that his mother's arms were still about him. I clung to him with all the force of human love and the hope of heaven, with all the tenderness in my heart that God has given to mothers. The sound of the child's voice made me tremble. I used to watch him while he slept with a sense of gladness that was always new, albeit a tear sometimes fell on his forehead; I taught him to come to say his prayer upon my bed as soon as he awoke. How sweet and touching were the simple words of the *Pater noster* in the innocent childish mouth! Ah! and at times how terrible! '*Our father which art in heaven*,' he began one morning; then he paused—

'Why is it not *our mother?*' he asked, and my heart sank at his words.

"From the very first I had sown the seeds of future misfortune in the life of the son whom I idolized. Although the law has almost countenanced errors of youth by conceding to tardy regret a legal status to natural children, the insurmountable prejudices of society bring a strong force to the support of the reluctance of the law. All serious reflection on my part as to the foundations and mechanism of society, on the duties of man, and vital questions of morality date from this period of my life. Genius comprehends at first sight the connection between a man's principles and the fate of the society of which he forms a part; devout souls are inspired by religion with the sentiments necessary for their happiness; but vehement and impulsive natures can only be schooled by repentance. With repentance came new light for me; and I, who only lived for my child, came through that child to think over great social questions.

"I determined from the first that he should have all possible means of success within himself, and that he should be thoroughly prepared to take the high position for which I destined him. He learned English, German, Italian, and Spanish in succession; and, that he might speak these languages correctly, tutors belonging to each of these various nationalities were successively placed about him from his earliest childhood. His aptitude delighted me. I took advantage of it to give him lessons in the guise of play. I wished to keep his mind free from fallacies, and strove before all things to accustom him from childhood to exert his intellectual powers, to make a rapid and accurate general survey of a matter, and then, by a careful study of every least particular, to master his subject in detail. Lastly, I taught him to submit to discipline without murmuring. I never allowed an impure or improper word to be spoken in his hearing. I was careful that all his surroundings, and the men with whom he came in contact, should conduce to one end—to ennoble his nature, to set lofty ideals before him, to

give him a love of truth and a horror of lies, to make him simple and natural in manner, as in word and deed. His natural aptitude had made his other studies easy to him, and his imagination made him quick to grasp these lessons that lay outside the province of the schoolroom. What a fair flower to tend! How great are the joys that mothers know! In those days I began to understand how his own mother had been able to live and to bear her sorrow. This, sir, was the great event of my life; and now I am coming to the tragedy which drove me hither.

"It is the most ordinary commonplace story imaginable; but to me it meant the most terrible pain. For some years I had thought of nothing but my child, and how to make a man of him; then when my son was growing up and about to leave me, I grew afraid of my loneliness. Love was a necessity of my existence; this need for affection had never been satisfied, and only grew stronger with years. I was in every way capable of a real attachment; I had been tried and proved. I knew all that a steadfast love means, the love that delights to find a pleasure in self-sacrifice; in everything I did my first thought would always be for the woman I loved. In imagination I was fain to dwell on the serene heights far above doubt and uncertainty, where love so fills two beings that happiness flows quietly and evenly into their life, their looks, and words. Such love is to a life what religion is to the soul; a vital force, a power that enlightens and upholds. I understood the love of husband and wife in nowise as most people do; for me its full beauty and magnificence began precisely at the point where love perishes in many a household. I deeply felt the moral grandeur of a life so closely shared by two souls that the trivialities of every-day existence should be powerless against such lasting love as theirs. But where will the hearts be found whose beats are so nearly *isochronous* (let the scientific term pass) that they may attain to this beatific union? If they exist, nature and chance have set them far apart, so that they cannot come together; they find each other too late, or death

comes too soon to separate them. There must be some good reasons for these dispensations of fate, but I have never sought to discover them. I cannot make a study of my wound, because I suffer too much from it. Perhaps perfect happiness is a monster which our species should not perpetuate. There were other causes for my fervent desire for such a marriage as this. I had no friends, the world for me was a desert. There is something in me that repels friendship. More than one person has sought me out, but, in spite of efforts on my part, it came to nothing. With many men I have been careful to show no sign of something that is called 'superiority'; I have adapted my mind to theirs; I have placed myself at their point of view, joined in their laughter, and overlooked their defects; any fame I might have gained I would have bartered for a little kindly affection. They parted from me without regret. If you seek for real feeling in Paris, snares await you everywhere, and the end is sorrow. Wherever I set my foot, the ground round about me seemed to burn. My readiness to acquiesce was considered weakness; though if I unsheathed my talons, like a man conscious that he may some day wield the thunderbolts of power, I was thought ill-natured; to others, the delightful laughter that ceases with youth, and in which in later years we are almost ashamed to indulge, seemed absurd, and they amused themselves at my expense. People may be bored nowadays, but none the less they expect you to treat every trivial topic with befitting seriousness.

"A hateful era! You must bow down before mediocrity, frigidly polite mediocrity which you despise—and obey. On more mature reflection, I have discovered the reasons of these glaring inconsistencies. Mediocrity is never out of fashion, it is the daily wear of society; genius and eccentricity are ornaments that are locked away and only brought out on certain days. Everything that ventures forth beyond the protection of the grateful shadow of mediocrity has something startling about it.

"So, in the midst of Paris, I led a solitary life. I had

given up everything to society, but it had given me nothing in return; and my child was not enough to satisfy my heart, because I was not a woman. My life seemed to be growing cold within me; I was bending under a load of secret misery when I met the woman who was to make me know the might of love, the reverence of an acknowledged love, love with its teeming hopes of happiness—in one word—love.

"I had renewed my acquaintance with that old friend of my father's who had once taken charge of my affairs. It was in his house that I first met her whom I must love as long as life shall last. The longer we live, sir, the more clearly we see the enormous influence of ideas upon the events of life. Prejudices, worthy of all respect, and bred by noble religious ideas, occasioned my misfortunes. This young girl belonged to an exceeding devout family, whose views of Catholicism were due to the spirit of a sect improperly styled Jansenists, which, in former times, caused troubles in France. You know why?"

"No," said Genestas.

"Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, once wrote a book which was believed to contain propositions at variance with the doctrines of the Holy See. When examined at a later date, there appeared to be nothing heretical in the wording of the text, some authors even went so far as to deny that the heretical propositions had any real existence. However it was, these insignificant disputes gave rise to two parties in the Gallican Church—the Jansenists and the Jesuits. Great men were found in either camp, and a struggle began between two powerful bodies. The Jansenists affected an excessive purity of morals and of doctrine, and accused the Jesuits of preaching a relaxed morality. The Jansenists, in fact, were Catholic Puritans, if two contradictory terms can be combined. During the Revolution, the Concordat occasioned an unimportant schism, a little segregation of ultra-catholics who refused to recognize the Bishops appointed by the authorities with the consent of the Pope. This little body of the faithful was called the Little Church;

and those within its fold, like the Jansenists, led the strictly ordered lives that appear to be a first necessity of existence in all proscribed and persecuted sects. Many Jansenist families had joined the Little Church. The family to which this young girl belonged had embraced the equally rigid doctrines of both these Puritanisms, tenets which impart a stern dignity to the character and mien of those who hold them. It is the nature of positive doctrine to exaggerate the importance of the most ordinary actions of life by connecting them with ideas of a future existence. This is the source of a splendid and delicate purity of heart, a respect for others and for self, of an indescribably keen sense of right and wrong, a wide charity, together with a justice so stern that it might well be called inexorable, and lastly, a perfect hatred of lies and of all the vices comprised by falsehood.

"I can recall no more delightful moments than those of our first meeting at my old friend's house. I beheld for the first time this shy young girl with her sincere nature, her habits of ready obedience. All the virtues peculiar to the sect to which she belonged shone in her, but she seemed to be unconscious of her merit. There was a grace, which no austerity could diminish, about every movement of her lissome, slender form; her quiet brow, the delicate grave outlines of her face, and her clearly cut features indicated noble birth; her expression was gentle and proud; her thick hair had been simply braided, the coronet of plaits about her head served, all unknown to her, as an adornment. Captain, she was for me the ideal type that is always made real for us in the woman with whom we fall in love; for when we love, is it not because we recognize beauty that we have dreamed of, the beauty that has existed in idea for us is realized? When I spoke to her, she answered simply, without shyness or eagerness; she did not know what a pleasure it was to me to see her, to hear the musical sounds of her voice. All these angels are revealed to our hearts by the same signs; by the sweetness of their tones, the tenderness in their eyes, by their fair, pale faces, and their gracious ways. All these

things are so blended and mingled that we feel the charm of their presence, yet cannot tell in what that charm consists, and every movement is an expression of a divine soul within. I loved passionately. This newly awakened love satisfied all my restless longings, all my ambitious dreams. She was beautiful, wealthy, and nobly born; she had been carefully brought up; she had all the qualifications which the world positively demands of a woman placed in the high position which I desired to reach; she had been well educated, she expressed herself with a sprightly facility at once rare and common in France; where the most prettily worded phrases of many women are emptiness itself, while her bright talk was full of sense. Above all, she had a deep consciousness of her own dignity which made others respect her; I know of no more excellent thing in a wife. I must stop, captain; no one can describe the woman he loves save very imperfectly, pre-existent mysteries which defy analysis lie between them.

"I very soon took my old friend into my confidence. He introduced me to her family, and gave me the countenance of his honorable character. I was received at first with the frigid politeness characteristic of those exclusive people who never forsake those whom they have once admitted to their friendship. As time went on they welcomed me almost as one of the family; this mark of their esteem was won by my behavior in the matter. In spite of my passionate love, I did nothing that could lower me in my own eyes; I did not cringe, I paid no court to those upon whom my fate depended, before all things I showed myself a man, and not other than I really was. When I was well known to them, my old friend, who was as desirous as I myself that my life of melancholy loneliness should come to an end, spoke of my hopes and met with a favorable reception; but with the diplomatic shrewdness which is almost a second nature with men of the world, he was silent with regard to an error of my youth, as he termed it. He was anxious to bring about a 'satisfactory marriage' for me, an expression that makes

of so solemn an act a business transaction in which husband and wife endeavor to cheat each other. In his opinion, the existence of my child would excite a moral repugnance, in comparison with which the question of money would be as naught, and the whole affair would be broken off at once, and he was right.

" 'It is a matter which will be very easily settled between you and your wife; it will be easy to obtain her full and free forgiveness,' he said.

"In short, he tried to silence my scruples, and all the insidious arguments that worldly wisdom could suggest were brought to bear upon me to this end. I will confess to you, sir, that, in spite of my promise, my first impulse was to act straightforwardly and to make everything known to the head of the family, but the thought of his uncompromising sternness made me pause, and the probable consequences of the confession appalled me; my courage failed, I temporized with my conscience, I determined to wait until I was sufficiently sure of the affection of the girl I hoped to win, before hazarding my happiness by the terrible confession. My resolution to acknowledge everything openly, at a convenient season, vindicated the sophistries of worldly wisdom and the sagacity of my old friend. So the young girl's parents received me as their future son-in-law without, as yet, taking their friends into their confidence.

"An infinite discretion is the distinguishing quality of pious families; they are reticent about everything, even about matters of no importance. You would not believe, sir, how this sedate gravity and reserve, pervading every least action, deepens the current of feeling and thought. Everything in that house was done with some useful end in view; the women spent their leisure time in making garments for the poor; their conversation was never frivolous; laughter was not banished, but there was a kindly simplicity about their merriment. Their talk had none of the piquancy which scandal and ill-natured gossip give to the conversation of society; only the father and uncle read the newspapers,

even the most harmless journal contains references to crimes or to public evils, and she whom I hoped to win had never cast her eyes over their sheets. How strange it was, at first, to listen to these orthodox people! But in a little while, the pure atmosphere left the same impression upon the soul that subdued colors give to the eyes, a sense of serene repose and of tranquil peace.

"To a superficial observer, their life would have seemed terribly monotonous. There was something chilling about the appearance of the interior of the house. Day after day I used to see everything, even the furniture in constant use, always standing in the same place, and this uniform tidiness pervaded the smallest details. Yet there was something very attractive about their household ways. I had been used to the pleasures of variety, to the luxury and stir of life in Paris; it was only when I had overcome my first repugnance that I saw the advantages of this existence; how it lent itself to continuity of thought and to involuntary meditation; how a life in which the heart has undisturbed sway seems to widen and grow vast as the sea. It is like the life of the cloister, where the outward surroundings never vary, and thought is thus compelled to detach itself from outward things and to turn to the infinite that lies within the soul!

"For a man as sincerely in love as I was, the silence and simplicity of the life, the almost conventual regularity with which the same things were done daily at the same hours, only deepened and strengthened love. In that profound calm the interest attaching to the least action, word, or gesture became immense. I learned to know that, in the interchange of glances and in answering smiles, there lies an eloquence and a variety of language far beyond the possibilities of the most magnificent of spoken phrases; that when the expression of the feelings is spontaneous and unforced, there is no idea, no joy nor sorrow that cannot thus be communicated by hearts that understand each other. How many times I have tried to set forth my soul in my eyes or on my lips,

compelled at once to speak and to be silent concerning my passion; for the young girl who, in my presence, was always serene and unconscious, had not been informed of the reason of my constant visits; her parents were determined that the most important decision of her life should rest entirely with her. But does not the presence of our beloved satisfy the utmost desire of passionate love? In that presence do we not know the happiness of the Christian who stands before God? If for me more than for any other it was torture to have no right to give expression to the impulses of my heart, to force back into its depths the burning words that treacherously wrong the yet more ardent emotions which strive to find an utterance in speech; I found, nevertheless, in the merest trifles a channel through which my passionate love poured itself forth but the more vehemently for this constraint, till every least occurrence came to have an excessive importance.

"I beheld her, not for brief moments, but for whole hours. There were pauses between my question and her answer, and long musings, when, with the tones of her voice lingering in my ears, I sought to divine from them the secret of her inmost thoughts; perhaps her fingers would tremble as I gave her some object of which she had been in search, or I would devise pretexts to lightly touch her dress or her hair, to take her hand in mine, to compel her to speak more than she wished; all these nothings were great events for me. Eyes and voice and gestures were freighted with mysterious messages of love in hours of ecstasy like these, and this was the only language permitted me by the quiet maidenly reserve of the young girl before me. Her manner toward me underwent no change; with me she was always as a sister with a brother; yet, as my passion grew, and the contrast between her glances and mine, her words and my utterance, became more striking, I felt at last that this timid silence was the only means by which she could express her feelings. Was she not always in the salon whenever I came? Did she not stay there until my visit, expected and perhaps

foreseen, was over? Did not this mute tryst betray the secret of her innocent soul? Nay, while I spoke did she not listen with a pleasure which she could not hide?

"At last, no doubt, her parents grew impatient with this artless behavior and sober love-making. I was almost as timid as their daughter, and perhaps on this account found favor in their eyes. They regarded me as a man worthy of their esteem. My old friend was taken into their confidence; both father and mother spoke of me in the most flattering terms; I had become their adopted son, and more especially they singled out my moral principles for praise. In truth, I had found my youth again; among these pure and religious surroundings early beliefs and early faith came back to the man of thirty-two.

"The summer was drawing to a close. Affairs of some importance had detained the family in Paris longer than their wont; but when September came, and they were able to leave town at last for an estate in Auvergne, her father entreated me to spend a couple of months with them in an old chateau hidden away among the mountains of the Cantal. I paused before accepting this friendly invitation. My hesitation brought me the sweetest and most delightful unconscious confession, a revelation of the mysteries of a girlish heart. Evelina . . . *Dieu!*" exclaimed Benassis; and he said no more for a time, wrapped in his own thoughts.

"Pardon me, Captain Bluteau," he resumed, after a long pause. "For twelve years I have not uttered the name that is always hovering in my thoughts, that a voice calls in my hearing even when I sleep. Evelina (since I have named her) raised her head with a strange quickness and abruptness, for about all her movements there was an instinctive grace and gentleness, and looked at me. There was no pride in her face, but rather a wistful anxiety. Then her color rose, and her eyelids fell; it gave me an indescribable pleasure never felt before that they should fall so slowly; I could only stammer out my reply in a faltering voice. The emotion of my own heart made swift answer to hers. She

thanked me by a happy look, and I almost thought that there were tears in her eyes. In that moment we had told each other everything. So I went into the country with her family. Since the day when our hearts had understood each other, nothing seemed to be as it had been before; everything about us had acquired a fresh significance.

"Love, indeed, is always the same, though our imagination determines the shape that love must assume; like and unlike, therefore, is love in every soul in which he dwells, and passion becomes a unique work in which the soul expresses its sympathies. In the old trite saying that love is a projection of self—an *égoïsme à deux*—lies a profound meaning known only to philosopher and poet; for it is ourself in truth that we love in that other. Yet, though love manifests itself in such different ways that no pair of lovers since the world began is like any other pair before or since, they all express themselves after the same fashion, and the same words are on the lips of every girl, even of the most innocent, convent-bred maiden—the only difference lies in the degree of imaginative charm in their ideas. But between Evelina and other girls there was this difference, that where another would have poured out her feelings quite naturally, Evelina regarded these innocent confidences as a concession made to the stormy emotions which had invaded the quiet sanctuary of her girlish soul. The constant struggle between her heart and her principles gave to the least event of her life, so peaceful in appearance, in reality so profoundly agitated, a character of force very superior to the exaggerations of young girls whose manners are early rendered false by the world about them. All through the journey Evelina discovered beauty in the scenery through which we passed, and spoke of it with admiration. When we think that we may not give expression to the happiness which is given to us by the presence of one we love, we pour out the secret gladness that overflows our hearts upon inanimate things, investing them with beauty in our happiness. The charm of the scenery which passed before our eyes became in this way an

interpreter between us, for in our praises of the landscape we revealed to each other the secrets of our love. Evelina's mother sometimes took a mischievous pleasure in disconcerting her daughter.

"'My dear child, you have been through this valley a score of times without seeming to admire it!' she remarked after a somewhat too enthusiastic phrase from Evelina.

"'No doubt it was because I was not old enough to understand beauty of this kind, mother.'

"Forgive me for dwelling on this trifle, which can have no charm for you, captain; but the simple words brought me an indescribable joy, which had its source in the glance directed toward me as she spoke. So some village lighted by the sunrise, some ivy-covered ruin which we had seen together, memories of outward and visible things, served to deepen and strengthen the impressions of our happiness; they seemed to be landmarks on the way through which we were passing toward a bright future that lay before us.

"We reached the chateau belonging to her family, where I spent about six weeks, the only time in my life during which Heaven has vouchsafed complete happiness to me. I enjoyed pleasures unknown to town-dwellers—all the happiness which two lovers find in living beneath the same roof, an anticipation of the life they will spend together. To stroll through the fields, to be alone together at times, if we wished it, to look over an old water-mill, to sit beneath a tree in some lovely glen among the hills, the lovers' talks, the sweet confidences drawn forth by which each made some progress day by day in the other's heart. Ah! sir, the out-of-door life, the beauty of earth and heaven, is a perfect accompaniment to the perfect happiness of the soul! To mingle our careless talk with the song of the birds among the dewy leaves, to smile at each other as we gazed on the sky, to turn our steps slowly homeward at the sound of the bell that always rings too soon, to admire together some little detail in the landscape, to watch the fitful movements of an insect, to look closely at a gleaming demoiselle fly—the delicate

creature that resembles an innocent and loving girl; in such ways as these are not one's thoughts drawn daily a little higher? The memories of my forty days of happiness have in a manner colored all the rest of my life, memories that are all the fairer and fill the greater space in my thoughts, because since then it has been my fate never to be understood. To this day there are scenes of no special interest for a casual observer, but full of bitter significance for a broken heart, which recall those vanished days, and the love that is not forgotten yet.

"I do not know whether you noticed the effect of the sunset light on the cottage where little Jacques lives? Everything shone so brightly in the fiery rays of the sun, and then all at once the whole landscape grew dark and dreary. That sudden change was like the change in my own life at this time. I received from her the first, the sole and sublime token of love that an innocent girl may give; the more secretly it is given, the closer is the bond it forms, the sweet promise of love, a fragment of the language spoken in a fairer world than this. Sure, therefore, of being beloved, I vowed that I would confess everything at once, that I would have no secrets from her; I felt ashamed that I had so long delayed to tell her about the sorrows that I had brought upon myself.

"Unluckily, with the morrow of this happy day a letter came from my son's tutor, the life of the child so dear to me was in danger. I went away without confiding my secret to Evelina, merely telling her family that I was urgently required in Paris. Her parents took alarm during my absence. They feared that there I was entangled in some way, and wrote to Paris to make inquiries about me. It was scarcely consistent with their religious principles; but they suspected me, and did not even give me an opportunity of clearing myself.

"One of their friends, without my knowledge, gave them the whole history of my youth, blackening my errors, laying stress upon the existence of my child, which (said they) I

intended to conceal. I wrote to my future parents, but I received no answers to my letters; and when they came back to Paris, and I called at their house, I was not admitted. Much alarmed, I sent to my old friend to learn the reason of this conduct on their part, which I did not in the least understand. As soon as the good soul knew the real cause of it all, he sacrificed himself generously, took upon himself all the blame of my reserve, and tried to exculpate me, but all to no purpose. Questions of interest and morality were regarded so seriously by the family, their prejudices were so firmly and deeply rooted, that they never swerved from their resolution. My despair was overwhelming. At first I tried to deprecate their wrath, but my letters were sent back to me unopened. When every possible means had been tried in vain; when her father and mother had plainly told my old friend (the cause of my misfortune) that they would never consent to their daughter's marriage with a man who had upon his conscience the death of a woman and the life of a natural son, even though Evelina herself should implore them upon her knees; then, sir, there only remained to me one last hope, a hope as slender and fragile as the willow-branch at which a drowning wretch catches to save himself.

"I ventured to think that Evelina's love would be stronger than her father's scruples, that her inflexible parents might yield to her entreaties. Perhaps, who knows, her father had kept from her the reasons of the refusal, which was so fatal to our love. I determined to acquaint her with all the circumstances, and to make a final appeal to her; and in fear and trembling, in grief and tears, my first and last love-letter was written. To-day I can only dimly remember the words dictated to me by my despair; but I must have told Evelina that if she had dealt sincerely with me she could not and ought not to love another, or how could her whole life be anything but a lie? she must be false either to her future husband or to me. Could she refuse to the lover, who had been so misjudged and hardly entreated, the devotion which she would have shown to him as her husband, if the marriage

which had already taken place in our hearts had been outwardly solemnized? Was not this to fall from the ideal of womanly virtue? What woman would not love to feel that the promises of the heart were more sacred and binding than the chains forged by the law? I defended my errors; and in my appeal to the purity of innocence, I left nothing unsaid that could touch a noble and generous nature. But as I am telling you everything, I will look for her answer and my farewell letter," said Benassis, and he went up to his room in search of it.

He returned in a few moments with a worn pocketbook; his hands trembled with emotion as he drew from it some loose sheets.

"Here is the fatal letter," he said. "The girl who wrote those lines little knew the value that I should set upon the scrap of paper that holds her thoughts. This is the last cry that pain wrung from me," he added, taking up a second letter; "I will lay it before you directly. My old friend was the bearer of my letter of entreaty; he gave it to her without her parents' knowledge, humbling his white hair to implore Evelina to read and to reply to my appeal. This was her answer:

" 'Monsieur . . .' But lately I had been her 'beloved,' the innocent name she had found by which to express her innocent love, and now she called me *Monsieur!* . . . That one word told me everything. But listen to the rest of the letter—

" 'Treachery on the part of one to whom her life was to be intrusted is a bitter thing for a girl to discover; and yet I could not but excuse you, we are so weak! Your letter touched me, but you must not write to me again, the sight of your handwriting gives me such unbearable pain. We are parted forever. I was carried away by your reasoning; it extinguished all the harsh feelings that had risen up against you in my soul. I had been so proud of your truth! But both of us have found my father's reasoning irresistible. Yes, Monsieur, I ventured to plead for you. I did for you

what I have never done before, I overcame the greatest fears that I have ever known, and acted almost against my nature. Even now I am yielding to your entreaties, and doing wrong for your sake, in writing to you without my father's knowledge. My mother knows that I am writing to you; her indulgence in leaving me at liberty to be alone with you for a moment has taught me the depth of her love for me, and strengthened my determination to bow to the decree of my family, against which I had almost rebelled. So I am writing to you, Monsieur, for the first and last time. You have my full and entire forgiveness for the troubles that you have brought into my life. Yes, you are right; a first love can never be forgotten. I am no longer an innocent girl; and, as an honest woman, I can never marry another. What my future will be, I know not therefore. Only you see, Monsieur, that echoes of this year that you have filled will never die away in my life. But I am in no way accusing you. . . . "I shall always be beloved!" Why did you write those words? Can they bring peace to the troubled soul of a lonely and unhappy girl? Have you not already laid waste my future, giving me memories which will never cease to revisit me? Henceforth I can only give myself to God, but will He accept a broken heart? He has had some purpose to fulfil in sending these afflictions to me; doubtless it was His will that I should turn to Him, my only refuge here below. Nothing remains to me here upon this earth. You have all a man's ambition wherewith to beguile your sorrows. I do not say this as a reproach; it is a sort of religious consolation. If we both bear a grievous burden at this moment, I think that my share of it is the heavier. He in whom I have put my trust, and of whom you can feel no jealousy, has joined our lives together, and He puts them asunder according to His will. I have seen that your religious beliefs were not founded upon the pure and living faith which alone enables us to bear our woes here below. Monsieur, if God will vouchsafe to hear my fervent and ceaseless prayers, He will cause His light to shine in your soul.

Farewell, you who should have been my guide, you whom once I had the right to call "my beloved," no one can reproach me if I pray for you still. God orders our days as it pleases Him. Perhaps you may be the first whom He will call to Himself; but if I am left alone in the world, then, Monsieur, intrust the care of the child to me.'

"This letter, so full of generous sentiments, disappointed my hopes," Benassis resumed, "so that at first I could think of nothing but my misery; afterward I welcomed the balm which, in her forgetfulness of self, she had tried to pour into my wounds, but in my first despair I wrote to her somewhat bitterly—

" 'Mademoiselle—that word alone will tell you that at your bidding I renounce you. There is something indescribably sweet in obeying one we love, who puts us to the torture. You are right, I acquiesce in my condemnation. Once I slighted a girl's devotion; it is fitting, therefore, that my love should be rejected to-day. But I little thought that my punishment was to be dealt to me by the woman at whose feet I had laid my life. I never expected that such harshness, perhaps I should say such rigid virtue, lurked in a heart that seemed to be so loving and so tender. At this moment the full strength of my love is revealed to me; it has survived the most terrible of all trials, the scorn you have shown for me by severing without regret the ties that bound us. Farewell forever. There still remains to me the proud humility of repentance: I will find some sphere of life where I can expiate the errors to which you, the mediator between Heaven and me, have shown no mercy. Perhaps God may be less inexorable. My sufferings, sufferings full of the thought of you, shall be the penance of a heart which will never be healed, which will bleed in solitude. For a wounded heart—shadow and silence.

" 'No other image of love shall be engraven on my heart. Though I am not a woman, I feel as you felt that when I said "I love you," it was a vow for life. Yes, the words

then spoken in the ear of "my beloved" were not a lie; you would have a right to scorn me if I could change. I shall never cease to worship you in my solitude. In spite of the gulf set between us, you will still be the mainspring of all my actions, and all the virtues are inspired by penitence and love. Though you have filled my heart with bitterness, I shall never have bitter thoughts of you; would it not be an ill beginning of the new tasks that I have set myself if I did not purge out all the evil leaven from my soul? Farewell, then, to the one heart that I love in the world, a heart from which I am cast out. Never has more feeling and more tenderness been expressed in a farewell, for is it not fraught with the life and soul of one who can never hope again, and must be henceforth as one dead? . . . Farewell. May peace be with you, and may all the sorrow of our lot fall to me!' "

Benassis and Genestas looked at each other for a moment after reading the two letters, each full of sad thoughts, of which neither spoke.

"As you see, this is only a rough copy of my last letter," said Benassis; "it is all that remains to me to-day of my blighted hopes. When I had sent the letter, I fell into an indescribable state of depression. All the ties that hold one to life were bound together in the hope of wedded happiness which was henceforth lost to me forever. I had to bid farewell to the joys of a permitted and acknowledged love, to all the generous ideas that had thronged up from the depths of my heart. The prayers of a penitent soul that thirsted for righteousness and for all things lovely and of good report had been rejected by these religious people. At first, the wildest resolutions and most frantic thoughts surged through my mind, but happily for me the sight of my son brought self-control. I felt all the more strongly drawn toward him for the misfortunes of which he was the innocent cause, and for which I had in reality only myself to blame. In him I found all my consolation.

"At the age of thirty-four I might still hope to do my country noble service. I determined to make a name for myself, a name so illustrious that no one should remember the stain on the birth of my son. How many noble thoughts I owe to him! How full a life I led in those days while I was absorbed in planning out his future! I feel stifled," cried Benassis. "All this happened eleven years ago, and yet to this day I cannot bear to think of that fatal year. . . . My child died, sir; I lost him!"

The doctor was silent, and hid his face in his hands; when he was somewhat calmer he raised his head again, and Genestas saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"At first it seemed as if this thunderbolt had uprooted me," Benassis resumed. "It was a blow from which I could only expect to recover after I had been transplanted into a different soil from that of the social world in which I lived. It was not till some time afterward that I saw the finger of God in my misfortunes, and later still that I learned to submit to His will and to hearken to His voice. It was impossible that resignation should come to me all at once. My impetuous and fiery nature broke out in a final storm of rebellion.

"It was long before I brought myself to take the only step befitting a Catholic, indeed my thoughts ran on suicide. This succession of misfortunes had contributed to develop melancholy feelings in me, and I deliberately determined to take my own life. It seemed to me that it was permissible to take leave of life when life was ebbing fast. There was nothing unnatural, I thought, about suicide. The ravages of mental distress affected the soul of man in the same way that acute physical anguish affected the body; and an intelligent being, suffering from a moral malady, had surely a right to destroy himself, a right he shares with the sheep, that, fallen a victim to the 'staggers,' beats its head against a tree. Were the soul's diseases in truth more readily cured than those of the body? I scarcely think so, to this day. Nor do I know which is the more craven soul—he who hopes

even when hope is no longer possible, or he who despairs. Death is the natural termination of a physical malady, and it seemed to me that suicide was the final crisis in the sufferings of a mind diseased, for it was in the power of the will to end them when reason showed that death was preferable to life. So it is not the pistol, but a thought that puts an end to our existence. Again, when fate may suddenly lay us low in the midst of a happy life, can we be blamed for ourselves refusing to bear a life of misery?

"But my reflections during that time of mourning turned on loftier themes. The grandeur of pagan philosophy attracted me, and for a while I became a convert. In my efforts to discover new rights for man, I thought that with the aid of modern thought I could penetrate further into the questions to which those old-world systems of philosophy had furnished solutions.

"Epicurus permitted suicide. Was it not the natural outcome of his system of ethics? The gratification of the senses was to be obtained at any cost; and when this became impossible, the easiest and best course was for the animate being to return to the repose of inanimate nature. Happiness, or the hope of happiness, was the one end for which man existed, for one who suffered, and who suffered without hope, death ceased to be an evil, and became a good, and suicide became a final act of wisdom. This act Epicurus neither blamed nor praised; he was content to say as he poured a libation to Bacchus, '*As for death, there is nothing in death to move our laughter or our tears.*'

"With a loftier morality than that of the Epicureans, and a sterner sense of man's duties, Zeno and the Stoic philosophers prescribed suicide in certain cases to their followers. They reasoned thus: Man differs from the brute in that he has the sovereign right to dispose of his person; take away this power of life and death over himself, and he becomes the plaything of fate, the slave of other men. Rightly understood, this power of life and death is a sufficient counterpoise for all the ills of life; the same power when conferred

upon another, upon his fellow-man, leads to tyranny of every kind. Man has no power whatever unless he has unlimited freedom of action. Suppose that he has been guilty of some irreparable error, from the shameful consequences of which there is no escape; a sordid nature swallows down the disgrace and survives it, the wise man drinks the hemlock and dies. Suppose that the remainder of life is to be one constant struggle with the gout which racks our bones, or with a gnawing and disfiguring cancer, the wise man dismisses quacks, and at the proper moment bids a last farewell to the friends whom he only saddens by his presence. Or another perhaps has fallen alive into the hands of the tyrant against whom he fought. What shall he do? The oath of allegiance is tendered to him; he must either subscribe or stretch out his neck to the executioner; the fool takes the latter course, the coward subscribes, the wise man strikes a last blow for liberty—in his own heart. 'You who are free,' the Stoic was wont to say, 'know then how to preserve your freedom! Find freedom from your own passions by sacrificing them to duty, freedom from the tyranny of mankind by pointing to the sword or the poison which will put you beyond their reach, freedom from the bondage of fate by determining the point beyond which you will endure it no longer, freedom of mind by shaking off the trammels of prejudice, and freedom from physical fear by learning how to subdue the gross instinct which causes so many wretches to cling to life.'

"After I had unearthed this reasoning from among a heap of ancient philosophical writings, I sought to reconcile it with Christian teaching. God has bestowed free-will upon us in order to require of us an account hereafter before the Throne of Judgment. 'I will plead my cause there!' I said to myself. But such thoughts as these led me to think of a life after death, and my old shaken beliefs rose up before me. Human life grows solemn when all eternity hangs upon the slightest of our decisions. When the full meaning of this thought is realized, the soul becomes conscious of something

vast and mysterious within itself, by which it is drawn toward the Infinite; the aspect of all things alters strangely. From this point of view life is something infinitely great and infinitely little. The consciousness of my sins had never made me think of heaven so long as hope remained to me on earth, so long as I could find a relief for my woes in work and in the society of other men. I had meant to make the happiness of a woman's life, to love, to be the head of a family, and in this way my need of expiation would have been satisfied to the full. This design had been thwarted, but yet another way had remained to me—I would devote myself henceforward to my child. But after these two efforts had failed, and scorn and death had darkened my soul forever, when all my feelings had been wounded and nothing was left to me here on earth, I raised my eyes to heaven, and beheld God.

"Yet still I tried to obtain the sanction of religion for my death. I went carefully through the Gospels, and found no passage in which suicide was forbidden; but during the reading, the divine thought of Christ, the Saviour of men, dawned in me. Certainly He had said nothing about the immortality of the soul, but He had spoken of the glorious kingdom of His Father; He had nowhere forbidden parricide, but He condemned all that was evil. The glory of His evangelists, and the proof of their divine mission, is not so much that they made laws for the world, but that they spread a new spirit abroad, and the new laws were filled with this new spirit. The very courage which a man displays in taking his own life seemed to me to be his condemnation; so long as he felt that he had within himself sufficient strength to die by his own hands, he ought to have had strength enough to continue the struggle. To refuse to suffer is a sign of weakness rather than of courage, and, moreover, was it not a sort of recusance to take leave of life in despondency, an abjuration of the Christian faith which is based upon the sublime words of Jesus Christ: 'Blessed are they that mourn.'

"So, in any case, suicide seemed to me to be an unpardonable error, even in the man who, through a false conception of greatness of soul, takes his life a few moments before the executioner's axe falls. In humbling himself to the death of the cross, did not Jesus Christ set for us an example of obedience to all human laws, even when carried out unjustly? The word *resignation* engraved upon the cross, so clear to the eyes of those who can read the sacred characters in which it is traced, shone for me with divine brightness.

"I still had eighty thousand francs in my possession, and at first I meant to live a remote and solitary life, to vegetate in some country district for the rest of my days; but misanthropy is no Catholic virtue, and there is a certain vanity lurking beneath the hedgehog's skin of the misanthrope. His heart does not bleed, it shrivels, and my heart bled from every vein. I thought of the discipline of the Church, the refuge that she affords to sorrowing souls, understood at last the beauty of a life of prayer in solitude, and was fully determined to 'enter religion,' in the grand old phrase. So far my intentions were firmly fixed, but I had not yet decided on the best means of carrying them out. I realized the remains of my fortune, and set forth on my journey with an almost tranquil mind. *Peace in God* was a hope that could never fail me.

"I felt drawn to the rule of Saint Bruno, and made the journey to the Grande Chartreuse on foot, absorbed in solemn thoughts. That was a memorable day. I was not prepared for the grandeur of the scenery; the workings of an unknown Power greater than that of man were visible at every step, the overhanging crags, the precipices on either hand, the stillness only broken by the voices of the mountain streams, the sternness and wildness of the landscape, relieved here and there by Nature's fairest creations, pine trees that have stood for centuries and delicate rock plants at their feet, all combine to produce sober musings. There seemed to be no end to this waste solitude, shut in by its

lofty mountain barriers. The idle curiosity of man could scarcely penetrate there. It would be difficult to cross this melancholy desert of Saint Bruno's with a light heart.

"I saw the Grande Chartreuse. I walked beneath the vaulted roofs of the ancient cloisters, and heard in the silence the sound of the water from the spring, falling drop by drop. I entered a cell that I might the better realize my own utter nothingness, something of the peace that my predecessor had found there seemed to pass into my soul. An inscription, which in accordance with the custom of the monastery he had written above his door, impressed and touched me; all the precepts of the life that I meant to lead were there, summed up in three Latin words—*Fuge, late, tace.*"

Genestas bent his head as if he understood.

"My decision was made," Benassis resumed. "The cell with its deal wainscot, the hard bed, the solitude, all appealed to my soul. The Carthusians were in the chapel, I went thither to join in their prayers, and there my resolutions vanished. I do not wish to criticise the Catholic Church, I am perfectly orthodox, I believe in its laws and in the works it prescribes. But when I heard the chanting and the prayers of those old men, dead to the world and forgotten by the world, I discerned an undercurrent of sublime egoism in the life of the cloister. This withdrawal from the world could only benefit the individual soul, and after all what was it but a protracted suicide? I do not condemn it. The Church has opened these tombs in which life is buried; no doubt they are needful for those few Christians who are absolutely useless to the world; but for me, it would be better, I thought, to live among my fellows, to devote my life of expiation to their service.

"As I returned I thought long and carefully over the various ways in which I could carry out my vow of renunciation. Already I began, in fancy, to lead the life of a common sailor, condemning myself to serve our country in the lowest ranks, and giving up all my intellectual am-

bitions; but though it was a life of toil and of self-abnegation, it seemed to me that I ought to do more than this. Should I not thwart the designs of God by leading such a life? If He had given me intellectual ability, was it not my duty to employ it for the good of my fellow men? Then, besides, if I am to speak frankly, I felt within me a need of my fellow men, an indescribable wish to help them. The round of mechanical duties and the routine tasks of the sailor afforded no scope for this desire, which is as much an outcome of my nature as the characteristic scent that a flower breathes forth.

"I was obliged to spend the night here, as I have already told you. The wretched condition of the countryside had filled me with pity, and during the night it seemed as if these thoughts had been sent to me by God, and that thus He had revealed His will to me. I had known something of the joys that pierce the heart, the happiness and the sorrow of motherhood; I determined that henceforth my life should be filled with these, but that mine should be a wider sphere than a mother's. I would expend her care and kindness on a whole district; I would be a sister of charity, and bind the wounds of all the suffering poor in a countryside. It seemed to me that the finger of God unmistakably pointed out my destiny; and when I remembered that my first serious thoughts in youth had inclined me to the study of medicine, I resolved to settle here as a doctor. Besides, I had another reason. *For a wounded heart—shadow and silence;* so I had written in my letter; and I meant to fulfil the vow which I had made to myself.

"So I have entered into the paths of silence and submission. The *fuge, late, tace* of the Carthusian brother is my motto here, my death to the world is the life of this canton, my prayer takes the form of the active work to which I have set my hand, and which I love—the work of sowing the seeds of happiness and joy, of giving to others what I myself have not.

"I have grown so used to this life, completely out of the

world and among the peasants, that I am thoroughly transformed. Even my face is altered; it has been so continually exposed to the sun that it has grown wrinkled and weather-beaten. I have fallen into the habits of the peasants; I have assumed their dress, their ways of talking, their gait, their easy-going negligence, their utter indifference to appearances. My old acquaintances in Paris, or the she-coxcombs on whom I used to dance attendance, would be puzzled to recognize in me the man who had a certain vogue in his day, the sybarite accustomed to all the splendor, luxury, and finery of Paris. I have come to be absolutely indifferent to my surroundings, like all those who are possessed by one thought, and have only one object in view; for I have but one aim in life—to take leave of it as soon as possible. I do not want to hasten my end in any way; but some day, when illness comes, I shall lie down to die without regret.

"There, sir, you have the whole story of my life until I came here—told in all sincerity. I have not attempted to conceal any of my errors; they have been great, though others have erred as I have erred. I have suffered greatly, and I am suffering still, but I look beyond this life to a happy future which can only be reached through sorrow. And yet—for all my resignation, there are moments when my courage fails me. This very day I was almost overcome in your presence by inward anguish; you did not notice it, but—"

Genestas started in his chair.

"Yes, Captain Bluteau, you were with me at the time. Do you remember how, while we were putting little Jacques to bed, you pointed to the mattress on which Mother Colas sleeps? Well, you can imagine how painful it all was; I can never see any child without thinking of the dear child I have lost, and this little one was doomed to die! I can never see a child with indifferent eyes—"

Genestas turned pale.

"Yes, the sight of the little golden heads, the innocent beauty of children's faces always awakens memories of my

sorrows, and the old anguish returns afresh. Now and then, too, there comes the intolerable thought that so many people here should thank me for what little I can do for them, when all that I have done has been prompted by remorse. You alone, captain, know the secret of my life. If I had drawn my will to serve them from some purer source than the memory of my errors, I should be happy indeed! But then, too, there would have been nothing to tell you, and no story about myself."

V

ELEGIES

AS BENASSIS finished his story, he was struck by the troubled expression of the officer's face. It touched him to have been so well understood. He was almost ready to reproach himself for having distressed his visitor. He spoke—"But these troubles of mine, Captain Bluteau—"

"Do not call me Captain Bluteau," cried Genestas, breaking in upon the doctor, and springing to his feet with sudden energy, a change of position that seemed to be prompted by inward dissatisfaction of some kind. "There is no such person as Captain Bluteau. . . . I am a scoundrel!"

With no little astonishment, Benassis beheld Genestas pacing to and fro in the salon, like a bumble-bee in quest of an exit from the room which he has incautiously entered.

"Then who are you, sir?" inquired Benassis.

"Ah! there now!" the officer answered, as he turned and took his stand before the doctor, though he lacked courage to look at his friend. "I have deceived you!" he went on (and there was a change in his voice). "I have acted a lie for the first time in my life, and I am well punished for it; for after this I cannot explain why I came here to play the spy upon you, confound it! Ever since I have had a glimpse of your soul, so to speak, I would far sooner have taken a

box on the ear whenever I heard you call me Captain Bluteau! Perhaps you may forgive me for this subterfuge, but I shall never forgive myself; I, Pierre Joseph Genestas, who would not lie to save my life before a court-martial!"

"Are you Commandant Genestas?" cried Benassis, rising to his feet. He grasped the officer's hand warmly, and added: "As you said but a short time ago, sir, we were friends before we knew each other. I have been very anxious to make your acquaintance, for I have often heard M. Gravier speak of you. He used to call you 'one of Plutarch's men.'"

"Plutarch? Nothing of the sort!" answered Genestas. "I am not worthy of you; I could thrash myself. I ought to have told you my secret in a straightforward way at the first. Yet no! It is quite as well that I wore a mask, and came here myself in search of information concerning you, for now I know that I must hold my tongue. If I had set about this business in the right fashion it would have been painful to you, and God forbid that I should give you the slightest annoyance."

"But I do not understand you, commandant."

"Let the matter drop. I am not ill; I have spent a pleasant day, and I will go back to-morrow. Whenever you come to Grenoble, you will find that you have one more friend there, who will be your friend through thick and thin. Pierre Joseph Genestas's sword and purse are at your disposal, and I am yours to the last drop of my blood. Well, after all, your words have fallen on good soil. When I am pensioned off, I will look for some out-of-the-way little place, and be mayor of it, and try to follow your example. I have not your knowledge, but I will study at any rate."

"You are right, sir; the landowner who spends his time in convincing a commune of the folly of some mistaken notion of agriculture confers upon his country a benefit quite as great as any that the most skilful physician can bestow. The latter lessens the sufferings of some few individuals, and the former heals the wounds of his country.

But you have excited my curiosity to no common degree. Is there really something in which I can be of use to you?"

"Of use?" repeated the commandant in an altered voice. "*Mon Dieu!* I was about to ask you to do me a service which is all but impossible, M. Benassis. Just listen a moment! I have killed a good many Christians in my time, it is true; but you may kill people and keep a good heart for all that; so there are some things that I can feel and understand, rough as I look."

"But go on!"

"No, I do not want to give you any pain if I can help it."

"Oh! commandant, I can bear a great deal."

"It is a question of a child's life, sir," said the officer, nervously.

Benassis suddenly knitted his brows, but by a gesture he entreated Genestas to continue.

"A child," repeated the commandant, "whose life may yet be saved by constant watchfulness and incessant care. Where could I expect to find a doctor capable of devoting himself to a single patient? Not in a town, that much was certain. I had heard you spoken of as an excellent man, but I wished to be quite sure that this reputation was well founded. So before putting my little charge into the hands of this M. Benassis of whom people spoke so highly, I wanted to study him myself. But now—"

"Enough," said the doctor; "so this child is yours?"

"No, no, M. Benassis. To clear up the mystery, I should have to tell you a long story, in which I do not exactly play the part of a hero; but you have given me your confidence, and I can readily give you mine."

"One moment, commandant," said the doctor. In answer to his summons, Jacquotte appeared at once, and her master ordered tea. "You see, commandant, at night when every one is sleeping, I do not sleep. . . . The thought of my troubles lies heavily on me, and then I try to forget them by taking tea. It produces a sort of nervous inebriation—a

kind of slumber, without which I could not live. Do you still decline to take it?"

"For my own part," said Genestas, "I prefer your Hermitage."

"By all means. Jacquotte," said Benassis, turning to his housekeeper, "bring in some wine and biscuits. We will both of us have our night-cap after our separate fashions."

"That tea must be very bad for you!" Genestas remarked.

"It brings on horrid attacks of gout, but I cannot break myself of the habit, it is too soothing; it procures for me a brief respite every night, a few moments during which life becomes less of a burden. . . . Come. I am listening; perhaps your story will efface the painful impressions left by the memories that I have just recalled."

Genestas set down his empty glass upon the chimney-piece. "After the retreat from Moscow," he said, "my regiment was stationed to recruit for a while in a little town in Poland. We were quartered there, in fact, till the Emperor returned, and we bought up horses at long prices. So far so good. I ought to say that I had a friend in those days. More than once during the Retreat I had owed my life to him. He was a quartermaster, Renard by name; we could not but be like brothers (military discipline apart) after what he had done for me. They billeted us on the same house, a sort of shanty, a rat-hole of a place where a whole family lived, though you would not have thought there was room to stable a horse. This particular hovel belonged to some Jews who carried on their six-and-thirty trades in it. The frost had not so stiffened the old father Jew's fingers but that he could count gold fast enough; he had thriven uncommonly during our reverses. That sort of gentry lives in squalor and dies in gold.

"There were cellars underneath (lined with wood of course, the whole house was built of wood); they had stowed their children away down there, and one more particularly, a girl of seventeen, as handsome as a Jewess can be when she keeps herself tidy and has not fair hair. She was as

white as snow, she had eyes like velvet, and dark lashes to them like rats' tails; her hair was so thick and glossy that it made you long to stroke it. She was perfection, and nothing less! I was the first to discover this curious arrangement. I was walking up and down outside one evening, smoking my pipe, after they thought I had gone to bed. The children came in helter-skelter, tumbling over one another like so many puppies. It was fun to watch them. Then they had supper with their father and mother. I strained my eyes to see the young Jewess through the clouds of smoke that her father blew from his pipe; she looked like a new gold piece among a lot of copper coins.

"I had never reflected about love, my dear Benassis, I had never had time; but now at the sight of this young girl I lost my heart and head and everything else at once, and then it was plain to me that I had never been in love before. I was hard hit, and over head and ears in love. There I stayed smoking my pipe, absorbed in watching the Jewess until she blew out the candle and went to bed. I could not close my eyes. The whole night long I walked up and down the street smoking my pipe and refilling it from time to time. I had never felt like that before, and for the first and last time in my life I thought of marrying.

"At daybreak I saddled my horse and rode out into the country, to clear my head. I kept him at a trot for two mortal hours, and all but foundered the animal before I noticed it—"

Genestas stopped short, looked at his new friend uneasily, and said, "You must excuse me, Benassis, I am no orator; things come out just as they turn up in my mind. In a room full of fine folk I should feel awkward, but here in the country with you—"

"Go on," said the doctor.

"When I came back to my room I found Renard finely flustered. He thought I had fallen in a duel. He was cleaning his pistols, his head full of schemes for fastening a quarrel on any one who should have turned me off into the dark.

. . . Oh! that was just the fellow's way! I confided my story to Renard, showed him the kennel where the children were; and, as my comrade understood the jargon that those heathens talked, I begged him to help me to lay my proposals before her father and mother, and to try to arrange some kind of communication between me and Judith. Judith they called her. In short, sir, for a fortnight the Jew and his wife so arranged matters that we supped every night with Judith, and for a fortnight I was the happiest of men. You understand and you know how it was, so I shall not wear out your patience; still, if you do not smoke, you cannot imagine how pleasant it was to smoke a pipe at one's ease with Renard and the girl's father and one's princess there before one's eyes. Oh! yes, it was very pleasant!

"But I ought to tell you that Renard was a Parisian, and dependent on his father, a wholesale grocer, who had educated his son with a view to making a notary of him; so Renard had come by a certain amount of book-learning before he had been drawn by the conscription and had to bid his desk good-by. Add to this that he was the kind of man who looks well in a uniform, with a face like a girl's, and a thorough knowledge of the art of wheedling people. It was *he* whom Judith loved; she cared about as much for me as a horse cares for roast fowls. While I was in the seventh heaven, soaring above the clouds at the bare sight of Judith, my friend Renard (who, as you see, fairly deserved his name) was making a way for himself underground. The traitor arrived at an understanding with the girl, and to such good purpose that they were married forthwith after the custom of her country, without waiting for permission, which would have been too long in coming. He promised her, however, that if it should happen that the validity of this marriage was afterward called in question, they were to be married again according to French law. As a matter of fact, as soon as she reached France, Mme. Renard became Mlle. Judith once more.

"If I had known all this, I would have killed Renard

then and there, without giving him time to draw another breath; but the father, the mother, the girl herself, and the quartermaster were all in the plot like thieves in a fair. While I was smoking my pipe, and worshipping Judith as if she had been one of the saints above, the worthy Renard was arranging to meet her, and managing this piece of business very cleverly under my very eyes.

"You are the only person to whom I have told this story. A disgraceful thing, I call it. I have always asked myself how it is that a man who would die of shame if he took a gold coin that did not belong to him does not scruple to rob a friend of happiness and life and the woman he loves. My birds, in fact, were married and happy; and there was I, every evening at supper, moonstruck, gazing at Judith, responding like some fellow in a farce to the looks she threw at me in order to throw dust in my eyes. They have paid uncommonly dear for all this deceit, as you will certainly think. On my conscience, God pays more attention to what goes on in this world than some of us imagine.

"Down come the Russians upon us, the country is overrun, and the campaign of 1813 begins in earnest. One fine morning comes an order; we are to be on the battlefield of Lützen by a stated hour. The Emperor knew quite well what he was about when he ordered us to start at once. The Russians had turned our flank. Our colonel must needs get himself into a scrape, by choosing that moment to take leave of a Polish lady who lived outside the town, a quarter of a mile away; the Cossack advanced guard just caught him nicely, him and his picket. There was scarcely time to spring into our saddles and draw up before the town so as to engage in a cavalry skirmish. We must check the Russian advance if we meant to draw off during the night. Again and again we charged, and for three hours we did wonders. Under cover of the fighting the baggage and artillery set out. We had a park of artillery and great stores of powder, of which the Emperor stood in desperate need; they must reach him at all costs.

"Our resistance deceived the Russians, who thought at first that we were supported by an army corps; but before very long they learned their error from their scouts, and knew that they had only a single regiment of cavalry to deal with and the invalided foot soldiers in the depot. On finding it out, sir, they made a murderous onslaught on us toward evening; the action was so hot that a good few of us were left on the field. We were completely surrounded. I was by Renard's side in the front rank, and I saw how my friend fought and charged like a demon; he was thinking of his wife. Thanks to him, we managed to regain the town, which our invalids had put more or less in a state of defence, but it was pitiful to see it. We were the last to return—he and I. A body of Cossacks appeared in our way, and on this we rode in hot haste. One of the savages was about to run me through with a lance, when Renard, catching a sight of his manœuvre, thrust his horse between us to turn aside the blow; his poor brute, a fine animal it was upon my word, received the lance thrust and fell, bringing down both Renard and the Cossack with him. I killed the Cossack, seized Renard by the arm, and laid him crosswise before me on my horse like a sack of wheat.

" 'Good-by, captain,' Renard said; 'it is all over with me.'

" 'Not yet,' I answered; 'I must have a look at you.' We had reached the town by that time; I dismounted, and propped him up on a little straw by the corner of a house. A wound in the head had laid open the brain, and yet he spoke! . . . Oh! he was a brave man.

" 'We are quits,' he said. 'I have given you my life, and I had taken Judith from you. Take care of her and of her child, if she has one. And not only so—you must marry her.'

"I left him then and there, sir, like a dog; when the first fury of anger left me, and I went back again—he was dead. The Cossacks had set fire to the town, and the thought of Judith then came to my mind. I went in search of her, took her up behind me in the saddle, and, thanks to my swift

horse, caught up the regiment which was effecting its retreat. As for the Jew and his family, there was not one of them left, they had all disappeared like rats; there was no one but Judith in the house, waiting alone there for Renard. At first, as you can understand, I told her not a word of all that had happened.

"So it befell that all through the disastrous campaign of 1813 I had a woman to look after, to find quarters for her, and to see that she was comfortable. She scarcely knew, I think, the straits to which we were reduced. I was always careful to keep her ten leagues ahead of us as we drew back toward France. Her boy was born while we were fighting at Hanau. I was wounded in the engagement, and only rejoined Judith at Strasburg; then I returned to Paris, for, unluckily, I was laid up all through the campaign in France. If it had not been for that wretched mishap, I should have entered the Grenadier Guards, and then the Emperor would have promoted me. As it was, sir, I had three broken ribs and another man's wife and child to support! My pay, as you can imagine, was not exactly the wealth of the Indies. Renard's father, the toothless old shark, would have nothing to say to his daughter-in-law; and the old father Jew had made off. Judith was fretting herself to death. She cried one morning while she was dressing my wound.

" 'Judith,' I said, 'your child has nothing in this world—'

" 'Neither have I!' she said.

" 'Pshaw!' I answered, 'we will send for all the necessary papers, I will marry you; and as for his child, I will look on him as mine—' I could not say any more.

"Ah, my dear sir, what would not one do for the look by which Judith thanked me—a look of thanks from dying eyes; I saw clearly that I had loved, and should love her always, and from that day her child found a place in my heart. She died, poor woman, while the father and mother Jews and the papers were on the way. The day before she died, she found strength enough to rise and dress herself for her wedding, to go through all the usual performance, and set her name to

their pack of papers; then, when her child had a name and a father, she went back to her bed again; I kissed her hands and her forehead, and she died.

"That was my wedding. Two days later, when I had bought the few feet of earth in which the poor girl is laid, I found myself the father of an orphan child. I put him out to nurse during the campaign of 1815. Ever since that time, without letting any one know my story, which did not sound very well, I have looked after the little rogue as if he were my own child. I don't know what became of his grandfather; he is wandering about, a ruined man, somewhere or other between Russia and Persia. The chances are that he may make a fortune some day, for he seemed to understand the trade in precious stones.

"I sent the child to school. I wanted him to take a good place at the Ecole polytechnique and to see him graduate there with credit, so of late I have had him drilled in mathematics to such good purpose that the poor little soul has been knocked up by it. He has a delicate chest. By all I can make out from the doctors in Paris, there would be some hope for him still if he were allowed to run wild among the hills, if he was properly cared for, and constantly looked after by somebody who was willing to undertake the task. So I thought of you, and I came here to take stock of your ideas and your ways of life. After what you have told me, I could not possibly cause you pain in this way, for we are good friends already."

"Commandant," said Benassis after a moment's pause, "bring Judith's child here to me. It is doubtless God's will to submit me to this final trial, and I will endure it, I will offer up these sufferings to God, whose Son died upon the cross. Besides, your story has awakened tender feelings; does not that augur well for me?"

Genestas took both of Benassis's hands and pressed them warmly, unable to check the tears that filled his eyes and coursed down his sunburned face.

"Let us keep silence with regard to all this," he said.

"Yes, commandant. You are not drinking?"

"I am not thirsty," Genestas answered. "I am a perfect fool!"

"Well, when will you bring him to me?"

"Why, to-morrow, if you will let me? He has been at Grenoble these two days."

"Good! Set out to-morrow morning and come back again. I shall wait for you in La Fosseuse's cottage, and we will all four of us breakfast there together."

"Agreed," said Genestas, and the two friends as they went upstairs bade each other good-night. When they reached the landing that lay between their rooms, Genestas set down his candle on the window ledge and turned toward Benassis.

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!*" he said, with outspoken enthusiasm; "I cannot let you go without telling you that you are the third among christened men to make me understand that there is Something up there," and he pointed to the sky.

The doctor's answer was a smile full of sadness and a cordial grasp of the hand that Genestas held out to him.

Before daybreak next morning Commandant Genestas was on his way. On his return, it was noon before he reached the spot on the highroad between Grenoble and the little town, where the pathway turned that led to La Fosseuse's cottage. He was seated in one of the light open cars with four wheels, drawn by one horse, that are in use everywhere on the roads in these hilly districts. Genestas's companion was a thin, delicate-looking lad, apparently about twelve years of age, though in reality he was in his sixteenth year. Before alighting, the officer looked round about him in several directions in search of a peasant who would take the carriage back to Benassis's house. It was impossible to drive to La Fosseuse's cottage, the pathway was too narrow. The park-keeper happened to appear upon the scene, and helped Genestas out of his difficulty, so

that the officer and his adopted son were at liberty to follow the mountain footpath that led to the trysting-place.

"Would you not enjoy spending a year in running about in this lovely country, Adrien? Learning to hunt and to ride a horse, instead of growing pale over your books? Stay! look there!"

Adrien obediently glanced over the valley with languid indifference; like all lads of his age, he cared nothing for the beauty of natural scenery; so he only said, "You are very kind, father," without checking his walk.

The invalid listlessness of this answer went to Genestas's heart; he said no more to his son, and they reached La Fosseuse's house in silence.

"You are punctual, commandant!" cried Benassis, rising from the wooden bench where he was sitting.

But at the sight of Adrien he sat down again, and seemed for a while to be lost in thought. In a leisurely fashion he scanned the lad's sallow, weary face, not without admiring its delicate oval outlines, one of the most noticeable characteristics of a noble head. The lad was the living image of his mother. He had her olive complexion, beautiful black eyes with a sad and thoughtful expression in them, long hair, a head too energetic for the fragile body; all the peculiar beauty of the Polish Jewess had been transmitted to her son.

"Do you sleep soundly, my little man?" Benassis asked him.

"Yes, sir."

"Let me see your knees; turn back your trousers."

Adrien reddened, unfastened his garters, and showed his knee to the doctor, who felt it carefully over.

"Good. Now speak; shout, shout as loud as you can." Adrien obeyed.

"That will do. Now give me your hands."

The lad held them out; white, soft, and blue-veined hands, like those of a woman.

"Where were you at school in Paris?"

"At Saint Louis."

"Did your master read his breviary during the night?"

"Yes, sir."

"So you did not go straight off to sleep?"

As Adrien made no answer to this, Genestas spoke. "The master is a worthy priest; he advised me to take my little rascal away on the score of his health," he told the doctor.

"Well," answered Benassis, with a clear, penetrating gaze into Adrien's frightened eyes, "there is a good chance. Oh, we shall make a man of him yet. We will live together like a pair of comrades, my boy! We will keep early hours. I mean to show this boy of yours how to ride a horse, commandant. He shall be put on a milk diet for a month or two, so as to get his digestion into order again, and then I will take out a shooting license for him, and put him in Butifer's hands, and the two of them shall have some chamois-hunting. Give your son four or five months of outdoor life, and you will not know him again, commandant! How delighted Butifer will be! I know the fellow; he will take you over into Switzerland, my young friend; haul you over the Alpine passes and up the mountain peaks, and add six inches to your height in six months; he will put some color into your cheeks and brace your nerves, and make you forget all these bad ways that you have fallen into at school. And after that you can go back to your work; and you will be a man some of these days. Butifer is an honest young fellow. We can trust him with the money necessary for travelling expenses and your hunting expeditions. The responsibility will keep him steady for six months, and that will be a very good thing for him."

Genestas's face brightened more and more at every word the doctor spoke.

"Now, let us go in to breakfast. La Fosseuse is very anxious to see you," said Benassis, giving Adrien a gentle tap on the cheek.

Genestas took the doctor's arm and drew him a little aside. "Then he is not consumptive after all?" he asked.

"No more than you or I."

"Then what is the matter with him?"

"Pshaw!" answered Benassis; "he is a little run down."

La Fosseuse appeared on the threshold of the door; and Genestas noticed, not without surprise, her simple but coquettish costume. This was not the peasant girl of yesterday evening, but a graceful and well-dressed Parisian woman, against whose glances he felt that he was not proof. The soldier turned his eyes on the table, which was made of walnut wood. There was no tablecloth, but the surface might have been varnished, it was so well rubbed and polished. Eggs, butter, a rice pudding, and fragrant wild strawberries had been set out, and the poor child had put flowers everywhere about the room; evidently it was a great day for her. At the sight of all this, the commandant could not help looking enviously at the little house and the green sward about it, and watched the peasant girl with an air that expressed both his doubts and his hopes. Then his eyes fell on Adrien, with whom La Fosseuse was deliberately busying herself, and handing him the eggs.

"Now, commandant," said Benassis, "you know the terms on which you are receiving hospitality. You must tell La Fosseuse 'something about the army.'"

"But let the gentleman first have his breakfast in peace, and then, after he has taken a cup of coffee—"

"By all means, I shall be very glad," answered the commandant; "but it must be upon one condition, you will tell us the story of some adventure in your past life, will you not, mademoiselle?"

"Why, nothing worth telling has ever happened to me, sir," she answered, as her color rose. "Will you take a little more rice pudding?" she added, as she saw that Adrien's plate was empty.

"If you please, mademoiselle."

"The pudding is delicious," said Genestas.

"Then what will you say to her coffee and cream?" cried Benassis.

"I would rather hear our pretty hostess talk."

"You did not put that nicely, Genestas," said Benassis. He took La Fosseuse's hand in his and pressed it as he went on: "Listen, my child; there is a kind heart hidden away beneath that officer's stern exterior, and you can talk freely before him. We do not want to press you to talk, do not tell us anything unless you like; but if ever you can be listened to and understood, poor little one, it will be by the three who are with you now at this moment. Tell us all about your love affairs in the old days, that will not admit us into any of the real secrets of your heart."

"Here is Mariette with the coffee," she answered, "and as soon as you are all served, I will tell about my 'love affairs' very willingly. But M. le Commandant will not forget his promise?" she added, challenging the officer with a shy glance.

"That would be impossible, mademoiselle," Genestas answered respectfully.

"When I was sixteen years old," La Fosseuse began, "I had to beg my bread on the roadside in Savoy, though my health was very bad. I used to sleep at Echelles, in a manger full of straw. The innkeeper who gave me shelter was kind, but his wife could not abide me, and was always saying hard things. I used to feel very miserable; for though I was a beggar, I was not a naughty child; I used to say my prayers every night and morning, I never stole anything, and I did as Heaven bade me in begging for my living, for there was nothing that I could turn my hands to, and I was really unfit for work—quite unable to handle a hoe or to wind spools of cotton.

"Well, they drove me away from the inn at last; a dog was the cause of it all. I had neither father nor mother nor friends. I had met with no one, ever since I was born, whose eyes had any kindness in them for me. Morin, the old woman who had brought me up, was dead. She had been very good to me, but I cannot remember that she ever petted me much; besides, she worked out in the fields like

a man, poor thing; and if she fondled me at times, she also used to rap my fingers with the spoon if I ate the soup too fast out of the porringer we had between us. Poor old woman, never a day passes but I remember her in my prayers! If it might please God to let her live a happier life up there than she did here below! And, above all things, if she might only lie a little softer there, for she was always grumbling about the pallet-bed that we both used to sleep upon. You could not possibly imagine how it hurts one's soul to be repulsed by every one, to receive nothing but hard words and looks that cut you to the heart, just as if they were so many stabs of a knife. I have known poor old people who were so used to these things that they did not mind them a bit, but I was not born for that sort of life. A 'No' always made me cry. Every evening I came back again more unhappy than ever, and only felt comforted when I had said my prayers. In all God's world, in fact, there was not a soul to care for me, no one to whom I could pour out my heart. My only friend was the blue sky. I have always been happy when there was a cloudless sky above my head. I used to lie and watch the weather from some nook among the crags when the wind had swept the clouds away. At such times I used to dream that I was a great lady. I used to gaze into the sky till I felt myself bathed in the blue; I lived up there in thought, rising higher and higher yet, till my troubles weighed on me no more, and there was nothing but gladness left.

"But to return to my 'love affairs.' I must tell you that the innkeeper's spaniel had a dear little puppy, just as sensible as a human being; he was quite white, with black spots on his paws, a cherub of a puppy! I can see him yet. Poor little fellow, he was the only creature who ever gave me a friendly look in those days; I kept all my tit-bits for him. He knew me, and came to look for me every evening. How he used to spring up at me! And he would bite my feet, he was not ashamed of my poverty; there was something so grateful and so kind in his eyes that it brought tears into

mine to see it. 'That is the one living creature that really cares for me!' I used to say. He slept at my feet that winter. It hurt me so much to see him beaten that I broke him of the habit of going into houses to steal bones, and he was quite contented with my crusts. When I was unhappy, he used to come and stand in front of me, and look into my eyes; it was just as if he said, 'So you are sad, my poor Fosseuse?'

"If a traveller threw me some halfpence, he would pick them up out of the dust and bring them to me, clever little spaniel that he was! I was less miserable so long as I had that friend. Every day I put away a few halfpence, for I wanted to get fifteen francs together, so that I might buy him of Père Manseau. One day his wife saw that the dog was fond of me, so she herself took a sudden violent fancy to him. The dog, mind you, could not bear her. Oh, animals know people by instinct! If you really care for them, they find it out in a moment. I had a gold coin, a twenty-franc piece, sewed into the band of my skirt; so I spoke to M. Manseau: 'Dear sir, I meant to offer you my year's savings for your dog; but now your wife has a mind to keep him, although she cares very little about him, and rather than that, will you sell him to me for twenty francs? Look, I have the money here.'

" 'No, no, little woman,' he said; 'put up your twenty francs. Heaven forbid that I should take their money from the poor! Keep the dog; and if my wife makes a fuss about it, you must go away.'

"His wife made a terrible to-do about the dog. Ah! *mon Dieu!* any one might have thought the house was on fire! You never would guess the notion that next came into her head. She saw that the little fellow looked on me as his mistress, and that she could only have him against his will, so she had him poisoned; and my poor spaniel died in my arms. . . . I cried over him as if he had been my child, and buried him under a pine-tree. You do not know all that I laid in that grave. As I sat there beside it, I told

myself that henceforward I should always be alone in the world; that I had nothing left to hope for; that I should be again as I had been before, a poor lonely girl; that I should never more see a friendly light in any eyes. I stayed out there all through the night, praying God to have pity on me. When I went back to the highroad I saw a poor little child, about ten years old, who had no hands.

"'God has heard me,' I thought. I had prayed that night as I had never prayed before. 'I will take care of the poor little one; we will beg together, and I will be a mother to him. Two of us ought to do better than one; perhaps I shall have more courage for him than I have for myself.'

"At first the little boy seemed to be quite happy, and, indeed, he would have been hard to please if he had not been content. I did everything that he wanted, and gave him the best of all that I had; I was his slave in fact, and he tyrannized over me, but that was nicer than being alone, I used to think! Pshaw! no sooner did the little good-for-nothing know that I carried a twenty-franc piece sewed into my skirt-band than he cut the stitches, and stole my gold coin, the price of my poor spaniel! I had meant to have masses said with it. . . . A child without hands, too! Oh, it makes one shudder! Somehow that theft took all the heart out of me. It seemed as if I was to love nothing but it should come to some wretched end.

"One day at Echelles, I watched a fine carriage coming slowly up the hillside. There was a young lady, as beautiful as the Virgin Mary, in the carriage, and a young man, who looked like the young lady. 'Just look,' he said; 'there is a pretty girl!' and he flung a silver coin to me.

"No one but you, M. Benassis, could understand how pleased I was with the compliment, the first that I had ever had; but, indeed, the gentleman ought not to have thrown the money to me. I was all in a flutter; I knew of a short cut, a footpath among the rocks, and started at once to run, so that I reached the summit of the Echelles long before the carriage, which was coming up very slowly. I saw the young

man again; he was quite surprised to find me there; and as for me, I was so pleased that my heart seemed to be throbbing in my throat. Some kind of instinct drew me toward him. After he had recognized me, I went on my way again; I felt quite sure that he and the young lady with him would leave the carriage to see the waterfall at Couz, and so they did. When they had alighted, they saw me once more, under the walnut trees by the wayside. They asked me many questions, and seemed to take an interest in what I told them about myself. In all my life I had never heard such pleasant voices as they had, that handsome young man and his sister, for she was his sister I am sure. I thought about them for a whole year afterward, and kept on hoping that they would come back. I would have given two years of my life only to see that traveller again, he looked so nice. Until I knew M. Benassis these were the greatest events of my life. Although my mistress turned me away for trying on that horrid ball-dress of hers, I was sorry for her, and I have forgiven her; for, candidly, if you will give me leave to say so, I thought myself the better woman of the two, countess though she was."

"Well," said Genestas, after a moment's pause, "you see that Providence has kept a friendly eye on you, you are in clover here."

At these words La Fosseuse looked at Benassis with eyes full of gratitude.

"Would that I were rich!" came from Genestas. The officer's exclamation was followed by profound silence.

"You owe me a story," said La Fosseuse at last, in coaxing tones.

"I will tell it at once," answered Genestas. "On the evening before the battle of Friedland," he went on, after a moment, "I had been sent with a despatch to General Davoust's quarters, and I was on the way back to my own, when at a turn in the road I found myself face to face with the Emperor. Napoleon gave me a look.

" 'You are Captain Genestas, are you not?' he said.

"'Yes, your Majesty.'

"'You were out in Egypt?'

"'Yes, your Majesty.'

"'You had better not keep to the road you are on,' he said; 'turn to the left, you will reach your division sooner that way.'

"That was what the Emperor said, but you would never imagine how kindly he said it; and he had so many irons in the fire just then, for he was riding about surveying the position of the field. I am telling you this story to show you what a memory he had, and so that you may know that he knew my face. I took the oath in 1815. But for that mistake, perhaps I might have been a colonel to-day; I never meant to betray the Bourbons, France must be defended, and that was all I thought about. I was a Major in the Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard; and although my wound still gave me trouble, I swung a sabre in the battle of Waterloo. When it was all over, and Napoleon returned to Paris, I went too; then when he reached Rochefort, I followed him against his orders; it was some sort of comfort to watch over him and to see that no mishap befell him on the way. So when he was walking along the beach he turned and saw me on duty ten paces from him.

"'Well, Genestas,' he said, as he came toward me, 'so we are not yet dead, either of us?'

"It cut me to the heart to hear him say that. If you had heard him, you would have shuddered from head to foot, as I did. He pointed to the villanous English vessel that was keeping the entrance to the harbor. 'When I see *that*,' he said, 'and think of my Guard, I wish that I had perished in that torrent of blood.'

"Yes," said Genestas, looking at the doctor and at La Fosseuse, "those were his very words.

"'The generals who counselled you not to charge with the Guard, and who hurried you into your travelling carriage, were no true friends of yours,' I said.

"'Come with me,' he cried eagerly, 'the game is not ended yet.'

"'I would gladly go with your Majesty, but I am not free; I have a motherless child on my hands just now.'

"And so it happened that Adrien over there prevented me from going to St. Helena.

"'Stay,' he said, 'I have never given you anything. You are not one of those who fill one hand and then hold out the other. Here is the snuff-box that I have used through this last campaign. And stay on in France; after all, brave men are wanted there! Remain in the service, and keep me in remembrance. Of all my army in Egypt, you are the last that I have seen still on his legs in France.' And he gave me a little snuff-box.

"'Have "*Honneur et patrie*" engraved on it,' he said; 'the history of our last two campaigns is summed up in those three words.'

"Then those who were going out with him came up, and I spent the rest of the morning with them. The Emperor walked to and fro along the beach; there was not a sign of agitation about him, though he frowned from time to time. At noon, it was considered hopeless for him to attempt to escape by sea. The English had found out that he was at Rochefort; he must either give himself up to them, or cross the breadth of France again. We were wretchedly anxious; the minutes seemed like hours! On the one hand there were the Bourbons, who would have shot Napoleon if he had fallen into their clutches; and on the other, the English, a dishonored race, they covered themselves with shame by flinging a foe who asked for hospitality away on a desert rock, that is a stain which they will never wash away. While we were anxiously debating, some one or other among his suite presented a sailor to him, a Lieutenant Doret, who had a scheme for reaching America to lay before him. As a matter of fact, a brig from the States and a merchant vessel were lying in the harbor.

"'But how could you set about it, captain?' the Emperor asked him.

"'You will be on board the merchant vessel, Sire,' the

man answered. 'I will run up the white flag and man the brig with a few devoted followers. We will tackle the English vessel, set fire to her, and board her, and you will get clear away.'

"'We will go with you!' I cried to the captain. But Napoleon looked at us and said, 'Captain Doret, keep yourself for France.'

"It was the only time I ever saw Napoleon show any emotion. With a wave of his hand to us he went in again. I watched him go on board the English vessel, and then I went away. It was all over with him, and he knew it. There was a traitor in the harbor, who by means of signals gave warning to the Emperor's enemies of his presence. Then Napoleon fell back on a last resource; he did as he had been wont to do on the battlefield, he went to his foes instead of letting them come to him. Talk of troubles! No words could ever make you understand the misery of those who loved him for his own sake."

"But where is his snuff-box?" asked La Fosseuse.

"It is in a box at Grenoble," the commandant replied.

"I will go over to see it, if you will let me. To think that you have something in your possession that his fingers have touched! . . . Had he a well-shaped hand?"

"Very."

"Can it be true that he is dead? Come, tell me the real truth?"

"Yes, my dear child, he is dead; there is no doubt about it."

"I was such a little girl in 1815. I was not tall enough to see anything but his hat, and even so I was nearly crushed to death in the crowd at Grenoble."

"Your coffee and cream is very nice indeed," said Genestas. "Well, Adrien, how do you like this country? Will you come here to see mademoiselle?"

The boy made no answer; he seemed afraid to look at La Fosseuse. Benassis never took his eyes off Adrien; he appeared to be reading the lad's very soul.

"Of course he will come to see her," said Benassis. "But let us go home again, I have a pretty long round to make, and I shall want a horse. I dare say you and Jacquotte will manage to get on together while I am away."

"Will you not come with us?" said Genestas to La Fosseuse.

"Willingly," she answered; "I have a lot of things to take over for Mme. Jacquotte."

They started out for the doctor's house. Her visitors had raised La Fosseuse's spirits; she led the way along narrow tracks, through the loneliest parts of the hills.

"You have told us nothing about yourself, Monsieur l'Officier," she said. "I should have liked to hear you tell us about some adventure in the wars. I liked what you told us about Napoleon very much, but it made me feel sad. . . . If you would be so very kind—"

"Quite right!" Benassis exclaimed. "You ought to tell us about some thrilling adventure during our walk. Come, now, something really interesting like that business of the beam in the Beresina!"

"So few of my recollections are worth telling," said Genestas. "Some people come in for all kinds of adventures, but I have never managed to be the hero of any story. Oh! stop a bit though, a funny thing did once happen to me. I was with the Grand Army in 1805, and so, of course, I was at Austerlitz. There was a good deal of skirmishing just before Ulm surrendered, which kept the cavalry pretty fully occupied. Moreover, we were under the command of Murat, who never let the grass grow under his feet.

"I was still only a sub-lieutenant in those days. It was just at the opening of the campaign, and after one of these affairs, that we took possession of a district in which there were a good many fine estates; so it fell out that one evening my regiment bivouacked in a park belonging to a handsome chateau where a countess lived, a young and pretty woman she was. Of course, I meant to lodge in the house, and I hurried there to put a stop to pillage of any sort. I came

into the salon just as my quartermaster was pointing his carbine at the countess, his brutal way of asking for what she certainly could not give the ugly scoundrel. I struck up his carbine with my sword, the bullet went through a looking-glass on the wall, then I dealt my gentleman a backhanded blow that stretched him on the floor. The sound of the shot and the cries of the countess fetched all her people on the scene, and it was my turn to be in danger.

" 'Stop!' she cried in German (for they were going to run me through the body), 'this officer has saved my life!'

"They drew back at that. The lady gave me her handkerchief (a fine embroidered handkerchief, which I have yet), telling me that her house would always be open to me, and that I should always find a sister and a devoted friend in her, if at any time I should be in any sort of trouble. In short, she did not know how to make enough of me. She was as fair as a wedding morning and as charming as a kitten. We had dinner together. Next day I was distractedly in love, but next day I had to be in my place at Güntzburg, or wherever it was. There was no help for it, I had to turn out, and started off with my handkerchief.

"Well, we gave them battle, and all the time I kept on saying to myself, 'I wish a bullet would come my way! *Mon Dieu!* they are flying thick enough!'

"I had no wish for a ball in the thigh, for I should have had to stop where I was in that case, and there would have been no going back to the chateau, but I was not particular; a nice wound in the arm I should have liked best, so that I might be nursed and made much of by the princess. I flung myself on the enemy, like mad; but I had no sort of luck, and came out of the action quite safe and sound. We must march, and there was an end of it; I never saw the countess again, and there is the whole story."

By this time they had reached Benassis's house; the doctor mounted his horse at once and disappeared. Genestas recommended his son to Jacquotte's care, so the doctor on his return found that she had taken Adrien completely under

her wing, and had installed him in M. Gravier's celebrated room. With no small astonishment, she heard her master's order to put up a simple camp-bed in his own room, for that the lad was to sleep there, and this in such an authoritative tone that for once in her life Jacquotte found not a single word to say.

After dinner the commandant went back to Grenoble. Benassis's reiterated assurances that the lad would soon be restored to health had taken a weight off his mind.

Eight months later, in the earliest days of the following December, Genestas was appointed to be lieutenant-colonel of a regiment stationed at Poitiers. He was just thinking of writing to Benassis to tell him of the journey he was about to take, when a letter came from the doctor. His friend told him that Adrien was once more in sound health.

"The boy has grown strong and tall," he said; "and he is wonderfully well. He has profited by Butifer's instruction since you saw him last, and is now as good a shot as our smuggler himself. He has grown brisk and active too; he is a good walker, and rides well; he is not in the least like the lad of sixteen who looked like a boy of twelve eight months ago; any one might think he was twenty years old. There is an air of self-reliance and independence about him. In fact, he is a man now, and you must begin to think about his future at once."

"I shall go over to Benassis to-morrow, of course," said Genestas to himself, "and I will see what he says before I make up my mind what to do with that fellow," and with that he went to a farewell dinner given to him by his brother officers. He would be leaving Grenoble now in a very few days.

As the lieutenant-colonel returned after the dinner, his servant handed him a letter. It had been brought by a messenger, he said, who had waited a long while for an answer.

Genestas recognized Adrien's handwriting, although his head was swimming after the toasts that had been drunk in his honor; probably, he thought, the letter merely contained a request to gratify some boyish whim, so he left it unopened on the table. The next morning, when the fumes of champagne had passed off, he took it up and began to read.

"My dear father—"

"Oh! you young rogue," was his comment, "you know how to coax whenever you want something."

"Our dear M. Benassis is dead—"

The letter dropped from Genestas's hands; it was some time before he could read any more.

"Every one is in consternation. The trouble is all the greater because it came as a sudden shock. It was so unexpected. M. Benassis seemed perfectly well the day before; there was not a sign of ill-health about him. Only the day before yesterday he went to see all his patients, even those who lived furthest away; it was as if he had known what was going to happen; and he spoke to every one whom he met, saying, 'Good-by, my friends,' each time. Toward five o'clock he came back just as usual to have dinner with me. He was tired; Jacquotte noticed the purple flush on his face, but the weather was so very cold that she would not get ready a warm foot-bath for him, as she usually did when she saw that the blood had gone to his head. So she has been wailing, poor thing, through her tears for these two days past, 'If I had *only* given him a foot-bath, he would be living now!'

"M. Benassis was hungry; he made a good dinner. I thought he was in higher spirits than usual; we both of us laughed a great deal, I had never seen him laugh so much before. After dinner, toward seven o'clock, a man came with a message from Saint Laurent du Pont; it was a serious case, and M. Benassis was urgently needed. He said to me, 'I shall have to go, though I never care to set out on horseback when I have hardly digested my dinner, more especially when it is as cold as this. It is enough to kill a man!'

"For all that, he went. At nine o'clock the postman, Goguelat, brought a letter for M. Benassis. Jacquotte was tired out, for it was her washing-day. She gave me the letter and went off to bed. She begged me to keep a good fire in our bedroom, and to have some tea ready for M. Benassis when he came in, for I am still sleeping in the little cot-bed in his room. I raked out the fire in the salon, and went upstairs to wait for my good friend. I looked at the letter, out of curiosity, before I laid it on the chimney-piece, and noticed the handwriting and the postmark. It came from Paris, and I think it was a lady's hand. I am telling you about it because of things that happened afterward.

"About ten o'clock, I heard the horse returning, and M. Benassis's voice. He said to Nicolle, 'It is cold enough to-night to bring the wolves out. I do not feel at all well.' Nicolle said, 'Shall I go up and wake Jacquotte?' And M. Benassis answered, 'Oh! no, no,' and came upstairs.

"I said, 'I have your tea here, all ready for you,' and he smiled at me in the way that you know, and said, 'Thank you, Adrien.' That was his last smile. In a moment he began to take off his cravat, as though he could not breathe. 'How hot it is in here!' he said, and flung himself down in an armchair. 'A letter has come for you, my good friend,' I said; 'here it is;' and I gave him the letter. He took it up and glanced at the handwriting. 'Ah! *mon Dieu!*' he exclaimed, 'perhaps she is free at last!' Then his head sank back, and his hands shook. After a little while he set the lamp on the table and opened the letter. There was something so alarming in the cry he had given that I watched him while he read, and saw that his face was flushed, and there were tears in his eyes. Then quite suddenly he fell, head forward. I tried to raise him, and saw how purple his face was.

"'It is all over with me,' he said, stammering; it was terrible to see how he struggled to rise. 'I must be bled; bleed me!' he cried, clutching my hand. . . . 'Adrien,' he said again, 'burn this letter!' He gave it to me, and I threw

it on the fire. I called for Jacquotte and Nicolle. Jacquotte did not hear me, but Nicolle did, and came hurrying upstairs; he helped me to lay M. Benassis on my little bed. Our dear friend could not hear us any longer when we spoke to him, and although his eyes were open, he did not see anything. Nicolle galloped off at once to fetch the surgeon, M. Bordier, and in this way spread alarm through the town. It was all astir in a moment. M. Janvier, M. Dufau, and all the rest of your acquaintance were the first to come to us. But all hope was at an end, M. Benassis was dying fast. He gave no sign of consciousness, not even when M. Bordier cauterized the soles of his feet. It was an attack of gout, combined with an apoplectic stroke.

"I am giving you all these details, dear father, because I know how much you cared for him. As for me, I am very sad and full of grief, for I can say to you that I cared more for him than for any one else except you. I learned more from M. Benassis's talk in the evenings than I ever could have learned at school.

"You cannot imagine the scene next morning when the news of his death was known in the place. The garden and the yard here were filled with people. How they sobbed and wailed! Nobody did any work that day. Every one recalled the last time that they had seen M. Benassis, and what he had said, or they talked of all that he had done for them; and those who were least overcome with grief spoke for the others. Every one wanted to see him once more, and the crowd grew larger every moment. The sad news travelled so fast that men and women and children came from ten leagues round; all the people in the district, and even beyond it, had that one thought in their minds.

"It was arranged that four of the oldest men of the commune should carry the coffin. It was a very difficult task for them, for the crowd was so dense between the church and M. Benassis's house. There must have been nearly five thousand people there, and almost every one knelt as if the Host were passing. There was not nearly room for them in

the church. In spite of their grief, the crowd was so silent that you could hear the sound of the bell during mass and the chanting as far as the end of the High Street; but when the procession started again for the new cemetery, which M. Benassis had given to the town, little thinking, poor man, that he himself would be the first to be buried there, a great cry went up. M. Janvier wept as he said the prayers; there were no dry eyes among the crowd. And so we buried him.

"As night came on the people dispersed, carrying sorrow and mourning everywhere with them. The next day Gondrin and Goguelat, and Butifer, with some others, set to work to raise a sort of pyramid of earth, twenty feet high, above the spot where M. Benassis lies; it is being covered now with green sods, and every one is helping them. These things, dear father, have all happened in three days.

"M. Dufau found M. Benassis's will lying open on the table where he used to write. When it was known how his property had been left, affection for him and regret for his loss became even deeper if possible. And now, dear father, I am waiting for Butifer (who is taking this letter to you) to come back with your answer. You must tell me what I am to do. Will you come to fetch me, or shall I go to you at Grenoble? Tell me what you wish me to do, and be sure that I shall obey you in everything.

"Farewell, dear father, I send my love, and I am your affectionate son, ADRIEN GENESTAS."

"Ah! well, I must go over," the soldier exclaimed.

He ordered his horse and started out. It was one of those still December mornings when the sky is covered with gray clouds. The wind was too light to disperse the thick fog, through which the bare trees and damp house-fronts seemed strangely unfamiliar. The very silence was gloomy. There is such a thing as a silence full of light and gladness; on a bright day there is a certain joyousness about the slightest sound, but in such dreary weather Nature is not silent,

she is dumb. All sounds seemed to die away, stifled by the heavy air.

There was something in the gloom without him that harmonized with Colonel Genestas's mood; his heart was oppressed with grief, and thoughts of death filled his mind. Involuntarily he began to think of the cloudless sky on that lovely spring morning, and remembered how bright the valley had looked when he passed through it for the first time; and now, in strong contrast with that day, the heavy sky above him was a leaden gray, there was no greenness about the hills, which were still waiting for the cloak of winter snow that invests them with a certain beauty of its own. There was something painful in all this bleak and bare desolation for a man who was travelling to find a grave at his journey's end; the thought of that grave haunted him. The lines of dark pine-trees here and there along the mountain ridges against the sky seized on his imagination; they were in keeping with the officer's mournful musings. Every time that he looked over the valley that lay before him, he could not help thinking of the trouble that had befallen the canton, of the man who had died so lately, and of the blank left by his death.

Before long, Genestas reached the cottage where he had asked for a cup of milk on his first journey. The sight of the smoke rising above the hovel where the charity children were being brought up recalled vivid memories of Benassis and of his kindness of heart. The officer made up his mind to call there. He would give some alms to the poor woman for his dead friend's sake. He tied his horse to a tree, and opened the door of the hut without knocking.

"Good-day, mother," he said, addressing the old woman, who was sitting by the fire with the little ones crouching at her side. "Do you remember me?"

"Oh! quite well, sir! You came here one fine morning last spring and gave us two crowns."

"There, mother! that is for you and the children."

"Thank you kindly, sir. May Heaven bless you!"

"You must not thank me, mother," said the officer; "it is all through M. Benassis that the money has come to you."

The old woman raised her eyes and gazed at Genestas.

"Ah! sir," she said, "he has left his property to our poor countryside, and made all of us his heirs; but we have lost him who was worth more than all, for it was he who made everything turn out well for us."

"Good-by, mother! Pray for him," said Genestas, making a few playful cuts at the children with his riding whip.

The old woman and her little charges went out with him; they watched him mount his horse and ride away.

He followed the road along the valley until he reached the bridle-path that led to La Fosseuse's cottage. From the slope above the house he saw that the door was fastened and the shutters closed. In some anxiety he returned to the highway, and rode on under the poplars, now bare and leafless. Before long he overtook the old laborer, who was dressed in his Sunday best, and creeping slowly along the road. There was no bag of tools on his shoulder.

"Good-day, old Moreau!"

"Ah! good-day, sir. . . . I mind who you are now!" the old fellow exclaimed after a moment. "You are a friend of Monsieur, our late mayor! Ah! sir, would it not have been far better if God had only taken a poor rheumatic old creature like me instead? It would not have mattered if He had taken me, but *he* was the light of our eyes."

"Do you know how it is that there is no one at home up there at La Fosseuse's cottage?"

The old man gave a look at the sky.

"What time is it, sir? The sun has not shone all day," he said.

"It is ten o'clock."

"Oh! well, then, she will have gone to mass or else to the cemetery. She goes there every day. He has left her five hundred livres a year and her house for as long as she lives, but his death has fairly turned her brain, as you may say—"

"And where are you going, old Moreau?"

"Little Jacques is to be buried to-day, and I am going to the funeral. He was my nephew, poor little chap; he had been ailing a long while, and he died yesterday morning. It really looked as though it was M. Benassis who kept him alive. That is the way! All these younger ones die!" Moreau added, half-jestingly, half-sadly.

Genestas reined in his horse as he entered the town, for he met Gondrin and Goguelat, each carrying a pickaxe and shovel. He called to them, "Well, old comrades, we have had the misfortune to lose him—"

"There, there, that is enough, sir!" interrupted Goguelat, "we know that well enough. We have just been cutting turf to cover his grave."

"His life will make a grand story to tell, eh?"

"Yes," answered Goguelat, "he was the Napoleon of our valley, barring the battles."

As they reached the parsonage, Genestas saw a little group about the door; Butifer and Adrien were talking with M. Janvier, who, no doubt, had just returned from saying mass. Seeing that the officer made as though he were about to dismount, Butifer promptly went to hold the horse, while Adrien sprang forward and flung his arms about his father's neck. Genestas was deeply touched by the boy's affection, though no sign of this appeared in the soldier's words or manner.

"Why, Adrien," he said, "you certainly are set up again. My goodness! Thanks to our poor friend, you have almost grown into a man. I shall not forget your tutor here, Master Butifer."

"Oh! colonel," entreated Butifer, "take me away from here and put me into your regiment. I cannot trust myself now that M. le Maire is gone. *He* wanted me to go for a soldier, didn't he? Well, then, I will do what he wished. He told you all about me, and you will not be hard on me, will you, M. Genestas?"

"Right, my fine fellow," said Genestas, as he struck his hand in the other's. "I will find something to suit you,

set your mind at rest— And how is it with you, M. le Curé?"

"Well, like every one else in the canton, colonel, I feel sorrow for his loss, but no one knows as I do how irreparable it is. He was like an angel of God among us. Fortunately, he did not suffer at all; it was a painless death. The hand of God gently loosed the bonds of a life that was one continual blessing to us all."

"Will it be intrusive if I ask you to accompany me to the cemetery? I should like to bid him farewell, as it were."

Genestas and the curé, still in conversation, walked on together. Butifer and Adrien followed them at a few paces' distance. They went in the direction of the little lake, and as soon as they were clear of the town, the lieutenant-colonel saw on the mountain-side a large piece of waste land inclosed by walls.

"That is the cemetery," the curé told him. "He is the first to be buried in it. Only three months before he was brought here, it struck him that it was a very bad arrangement to have the churchyard round the church; so, in order to carry out the law, which prescribes that burial grounds should be removed to a stated distance from human dwellings, he himself gave this piece of land to the commune. We are burying a child, poor little thing, in the new cemetery to-day, so we shall have begun by laying innocence and virtue there. Can it be that death is after all a reward? Did God mean it as a lesson for us when He took these two perfect natures to Himself? When we have been tried and disciplined in youth by pain, in later life by mental suffering, are we so much the nearer to Him? Look! there is the rustic monument which has been erected to his memory."

Genestas saw a mound of earth about twenty feet high. It was bare as yet, but dwellers in the district were already busily covering the sloping sides with green turf. La Fosseuse, her face buried in her hands, was sobbing bitterly; she was sitting on the pile of stones in which they had planted a great wooden cross, made from the trunk of a

pine-tree, from which the bark had not been removed. The officer read the inscription; the letters were large, and had been deeply cut in the wood.

D. O. M.

HERE LIES

THE GOOD MONSIEUR BENASSIS

THE FATHER OF US ALL

PRAY FOR HIM

"Was it you, sir," asked Genestas, "who—?"

"No," answered the curé; "it is simply what is said everywhere, from the heights up there above us down to Grenoble, so the words have been carved here."

Genestas remained silent for a few moments. Then he moved from where he stood and came nearer to La Fosseuse, who did not hear him, and spoke again to the curé.

"As soon as I have my pension," he said, "I will come to finish my days here among you."

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